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BEATRICE MELTON'S DISCIPLINE.

LONDON:
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BEATRICE MELTON'S DISCIPLINE.

BY

MAUDE JEANNE FRANC,

AUTHOR OF "MARIAN," "VERMONT VALE," "EMILY'S CHOICE," "JOHN'S WIFE," "LITTLE MERCY," ETC., ETC.

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SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

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BEATRICE MELTON'S DISCIPLINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD YEAR OUT.

I AM watching the old year out—the new year in—how many are doing that to-night! It is an old family custom of ours, one long cherished in the *home* land, where we sang our old year's hymn in quiet heart-tones, and then went out into the frosty air to listen to the wailing from the different church towers; *wailing*, as it always seemed to me, the tolling out of the departing year. How nervously we waited during the succeeding pause, till the twelve strokes of midnight rang distinctly out, and then innumerable

chimes burst forth, joyously ringing in the new-born year!

We have done this for years in our adopted land, but it has been without the midnight toll, or the chime of bells; and the brilliant moon and its attendant stars more often looked upon a parched-up ground and through a sultry air; yet here and there, through the length and breadth of the land, there were many assemblages of Christians to be found, who watch the old year out and usher the new year in with the voice of prayer and praise, placing themselves and their future in His hands who alone can guide aright, and make the new year a blessed gift, sanctifying the crosses and blotting out the transgressions of the past.

I am watching alone this old year's night. There is no frosty air to come in at my little open window, for the night is close and sultry, and the moonbeams fall brightly through the wattle branches, and imprint the feathery sprays of the

shea-oaks upon the ground. There is a faint mingled perfume of mignonette and jasmine on the air, and the breeze just now shook the rosy blossoms of the oleander at the corner of the garden, and brought its fragrance near. I am watching alone, and yet I am not quite alone, for in the silence the soft low breathings of childhood's sleep are audible. They come from the little white bed in the corner of my room, where two sisters lie enfolded in each other's arms, and in balmy slumber. These are my little pupils; they share my room, but not my watch.

The past year! can I bear to review it? It has been such a hard, hard year to us all. We have truly been "shorn to the wind!" yet "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." So they tell me; and my gentle mother, in all her heavy trouble, by her very gentleness proclaims it true; yet I cannot see it, cannot feel it.

We were so happy, and had been so prosperous. Dear father seemed so well, so useful; how ill

could he be spared by any of us. Still more did the Church seem to need him; for the earnest, self-devoted labourers are so few, and the harvests very great; and yet, in the very midst of his earnest labours, in the midst of all our happiness, he was stricken, taken from us in a few short hours. "God took him, and he was not."

"God took him." Ah! they tell me *that* should be my consolation. "He never takes before the time. The wheat was ripe unto harvest. His work was finished; his ministrations ended; the crown awaiting; God took him, but not a moment too soon;" and because it was His hand that did it, they say my murmurings should be subdued.

No doubt they are right. But, ah, I am very rebellious. It is so hard, so hard, and I can only see the *darkness* in the dispensation, and no light. My father! oh my father! How much he was to me. How I relied on his strength, and trusted to his guidance in all things; and to leave us thus

at last, without a word, without a single farewell word!

Shall I ever forget that terrible day! We had been so busy, so happy all day long, preparing for our Sabbath-school fête—Katie, mother, and I; busy with cake and buns and bread, boiling ham for sandwiches and jam for tarts. Alice Monteith and Bella Gordon were with us, and our own Molly was lending her hearty assistance. It was such a merry, joyous time. Our father was out at the chapel, watching the boys, who were making framework for the floral decorations. He had been a long while absent, but we had been too busy to notice how long.

All at once there was a rush of feet and murmur of voices; and then they carried our dear father into our very midst—senseless, stricken, but not dead.

Not dead, but dying. The first glance at the dear face was enough to tell that tale. It wanted not the doctor's verdict. We knew he was past

earthly help, and the wail that burst from my lips was bitter.

"Bear up, dear Beattie, for your mother's sake," Alice Monteith whispered. It brought me to myself. I turned to my mother. She was pale to the very lips, but tearless. So pale and fragile, that I trembled as I put my arms round her, lest she, too, should be taken away.

"Oh, mother, darling, do not look so."

She gently put away my hands.

"It's God's will, my child," she whispered, with her pale dry lips. "We must submit; it is all right;" but the struggle was too much, for as she spoke she fell fainting into my arms.

There was no word, no sign. Our father will never wake again. God took him from us, and he was not.

Not a year ago! Our mourning garments still proclaim our loss, and our dear mother's calm sweet face looks out from its silvery bands of hair and her neat widow's cap. Our hearts, too,

are mourning still—and mine!—mine has not learnt the lesson which her dear lips would have taught. They cannot say "Thy will be done;" and though I know it is the Lord who has done this, I cannot continue "let Him do what seemeth good."

Oh, sad old year, thou art almost past! Five minutes more, and the clock on the parlour mantle will strike. I hear its warning note. Five minutes—all that is left of thee, old year! Scarcely can I credit how closely I am on the threshold of the new, with its unseen, unknown joys and sorrows. If I could only learn my mother's lesson of confidence and trust! If I could only pray!

Midnight! The twelve strokes rang out from the tiny clock almost joyously, as though they would welcome in the new year. Farewell, old 18—. May the new year bring brighter life and happier hours.

I sat and looked out upon the quiet scene long

and dreamily. The new year had come. I had entered it with all its future of joy or grief. Could I trust? Could I hope? No; my heart seemed cold and hard. I could not realize the Saviour's presence. I could not take the comforts He has to bestow. The peaceable fruits of righteousness had not been wrought. I was in the darkness, and saw not the light.

I rose at last with a heavy sigh. The house was still as death. Even the little ones in their white bed slept noiselessly; a hushed awe fell round me; and, ringing in my ears, came the words "Tempt not the Lord."

Where had I seen those words? What could they mean? I hurriedly threw aside my dressing-gown, and crept into bed; and my head had scarcely pressed my pillow when I fell asleep, sleeping on far into the day.

CHAPTER II.

OUR RETREAT.

We have a pleasant home nestling away among the hills, many miles out of Adelaide; a quaint old home, all the more lively for its quaintness. It was built many years ago, when wood was plentiful and easily obtained, and stone was not; but it is no rough-hewn slab-erection. It seems to me that the outer walls were formed of carefully-cut round pine-stems, closely placed side by side, and so well and thickly plastered, that few would guess the foundation of the structure. Without, the walls were stuccoed, and always carefully whitened; while a deep verandah swept round on every side, affording a delightful shade.

That verandah alone is a treasure. No colonial house ought to be built without one. Why should our houses be exposed to the full glare of our tropical sun? And yet how few permit the luxury to extend all round, as well as merely in the front.

Most of our rooms are large and well-ventilated, though the ceilings are rather low. The windows, especially in the front of the house, are wide and low, set in substantial frames; they are not indeed plate glass; the panes are comparatively small for the size of the window; but they admit the charms of light, air, and scenery, all so essential to the well-being of the inmates. We must have air, we cannot breathe freely without it; and certainly without light we should be dull, spiritless beings, stunted both in mental and physical growth.

It is a strange old rambling house, such an one not often met with in our colonies, and yet a growth upon growth has wrought it. Nine or

ten rooms were not built at once, but slowly added on room by room, as the requirements of the former inhabitants grew and multiplied; but to us it forms a very pleasant whole—the very thing we needed. Trees there are on all sides—a lovely bowery garden, in which the whispering shea-oaks and golden wattles bloom among green almonds, towering poplars, and shady willows. Fruits and flowers there are beyond our need, and vegetables in abundance. This is what we found awaiting us when, leaving the little township we had so long resided in, leaving dear father's grave behind us, we came here to commence our new life. There was but one thing to be done; what is there, indeed, that an educated woman *can* do but teach? There is so little left for them in the struggle for life. Thank God that so many can do this, well and efficiently.

So we came here to open a school, and through the kind recommendation of friends we had four

boarders to commence with, while a dozen girls from the surrounding farms came daily to share in our instruction. Our school prospers greatly, and I ought to be thankful. But am I?

Geoffrey and Otto still retain their situations; they ride daily to and from business. Geoffrey is in the branch bank at ——, and Otto is clerk at the large wheat-store in the same place. What would my darling mother do without a daily sight of her boys? Yet she is so meek, so patient, bearing her own weight of sorrow so silently; "looking up," she tells me; that is how she bears, not in her own strength, but leaning upon One who Himself bears one's sorrows, and wipes away all tears.

It is March now, and the days are gradually shortening and losing some of their heat. Very pleasant days we have had lately, so pleasantly cool that the violets are blooming in thick clusters before the schoolroom windows, where I am sitting to write. It is very quiet here, for

Katie is away with the girls for a walk to the post-office, and mother has an old friend in the parlour. The window is wide open, looking full into our lovely garden. The vine leaves are turning scarlet and orange on their stems, but a few clusters remain of the late harvest of fruit. The almond-trees are shaking off their leaves, and the almonds bursting from their shells; but there are plenty of monthly roses, and the Michaelmas-daisies and chrysanthemums are in full brilliant bloom. They are not favourites of mine; they are gay and brilliant, but I love them not. There is something flaunting in their brilliancy, an impudent pushing forward of pretensions, that offends me. One gladly turns to the little modest violet hiding its blue blossoms under its leafy shadow, yet breathing so rich a perfume; but who would look for fragrance from those gay colours?

Katie reminds me of the violets. She is just as gentle, and so quiet, yet so sweet. She is like

mother; yes, she certainly resembles her; she is just such another as mother must have been when she was young. She is like her, too, in her faith; there is the same upward gaze in all things; the same happy, trusting, resting spirit; a spirit that I crave, but shall never, never have. How different we are; *I*, unrestful, tossing too and fro, seeking rest and finding none; she, contented, tranquil, restful, with that expression in her sweet face that can only bear one interpretation: "I have left all to Jesus, and I know He can do nothing amiss."

Kenneth Gordon was here this morning. He has been staying at home the last fortnight. He called with a message for mother; something about the old hay-stack we had left behind us, and for which he had found a customer. It was before school hours. I was giving Lily Monteith a music lesson; but I left my pupil to practise, while I went with him, as he wanted, into the garden. He had brought some cuttings, and

wished to show me how to plant them. They were rather choice cuttings; still, I do not know that they required such very particular attention, or that I need have quitted my pupil to give it. I was quite sure of one thing—that he had something to say to me, and waited resignedly till it came. Waited while I watched him bending over the ground, breaking and smoothing the way amid the rich earth for his slips, now and then handing him the little watering-can, with which he saturated the ground for their reception.

"I planted some of those slips over your father's grave last week, Beattie," he presently said without glancing up, and going on steadily with his work; "I looked at them this morning; they have taken root, and are growing finely. They remind me of his own faith—fresh and strong. They are evergreens, though; I would not put anything else on *his* grave, Beattie."

"I am not sure that you are right there; fading and falling leaves seem more expressive,"

I answered in a choked voice, as soon as I could speak, and dashing away my indignant tears. Why will this man always tear open the bleeding wounds so remorselessly?

"No," he answered, "not to my mind;" and he rose to his full height as he said so, looking down upon me as I turned from him, leaning my arm and my head upon the fence against which I was standing. "Not to *my* mind," he continued firmly. "'In hope of a glorious resurrection,' this is how he died; fading leaves have nothing to do with him. You are looking into that grave, Miss Melton; there is nothing gained by that. *I* am thinking of this 'mortal putting on immortality,' and the evergreen typifies that most strongly."

"Is it not natural that I should look into the grave?" I asked, turning quite from him as I did so, for the bitter, angry thought was in my heart, and, struggling with my grief, refused to be comforted.

"Natural perhaps, but not wise, nor right," he answered, stooping again over his work, and drawing the mould tenderly round the tiny slips. "It is better to look up, Beattie," he presently continued. "All that you most loved of your father, all that we most revered and admired, is not in the grave, remember that."

I made no answer—I could not—all to me was dark, so dark; and yet from early childhood I had heard of these things, had heard them from those dear lips that would utter them no more. They had seemed but as idle tales. I had heard, but I had not listened with the understanding ear. Yet I believed in a future state; I believed in a God, in His overruling power; I knew Him as a sovereign, as a judge, but I knew Him not in the same way as my mother, and Katie, and Bella, and Kenneth Gordon knew Him, as a Father and a Friend; I did look down into the grave, and never upwards. Was it, as Kenneth said, either wise or right? It gave me, at least,

something to think over—something to search into.

He did not say any more after that; perhaps he divined my thoughts, as he often does, and concluded it best to leave me with what I had. As we walked slowly back to the house, he told me that Bella was going away on a visit for a time, and would be glad if I would come and see her before she went. She had so much to do, she was afraid that she could not spare an hour to run over and bid us good-bye, and I have promised to go to her.

Not wise to look into the grave? Ah, but so hard not to do it. All that we have loved to look upon is there. The lips we have kissed, the hands that have fondled us, the dear fond eyes. Ah, perhaps that is what he means; the light in them is quenched, the spirit is gone; that is not in the grave. Where then?

Where? Why in the realms of immortality, in the regions of everlasting life. My precious

father, I *know* that thou art safe; *thy* faith has fruition. Yet I am left out in the dark and the cold, in the bitter solitude of my own unbelief, and can see only the grave-clothes and the place where thou hast been laid.

CHAPTER III.

BELLA GORDON.

BELLA GORDON has gone. She left for her friends in Adelaide yesterday. How much I shall miss her during the two or three months of her absence. I can scarcely think of it; her strong, bright, cheerful nature is such a support. Not a week has passed without our meeting. I believe her little pony thoroughly knows our slip pannel, and stops of his own accord.

I promised to go and see her before she left, and I kept my promise, though it is months now since I have been in the neighbourhood. To go to Bella I have to pass our old home, and but for love of her I feel I could not have done it. But

it is over now; I have been, and I am better for it. I suppose the feeling I am encouraging is "morbid," as Kenneth Gordon scruples not to tell me—"a most unhealthy state of feeling." Yes, these were his very words, and perhaps he is right. At any rate, I did not feel half that I thought and dreaded I should have done, as I slowly walked past the rose-hedge that separated the dear old garden from the road, and caught sight of the white chimneys through the trees, from which no smoke was curling. The house is without a tenant yet; for the minister, Mr. Smith, who supplies our old church, lives in a distant township, and rides every Sunday to his work. There was a sad and forlorn look about the little closed gate, and the garden-path littered with leaves, and the curtainless windows; but I was alone, and bore it better so. Perhaps, too, the fact that our new residence is wearing a more home-like appearance—that all but one of our dear ones are every night gathered beneath its roof—

had much to do in subduing the pain, the agony I had anticipated.

Bella must have been watching for me. She was standing at the old slip pannel, as I turned into the road, and came running out to meet me.

"You dear little thing," she exclaimed, with a kiss and a hug. She always calls me little, because, I suppose, she is so tall herself. "And you have really walked all the way to bid me good-bye? Come away in, you are as hot and tired as possible."

I was hot and tired both, for three miles and a warm sun conduced sufficiently to that. I did not attempt to deny it.

"Geoffrey and Otto have the horses, you know," I said, as we walked slowly to the house; "we have not made up our minds to get a third horse at present; and when we do, for mother's sake it must be suitable for a trap of some kind."

"To be sure, darling; but how foolish of me

to forget *that;* we might have sent a horse for you so easily."

"Ah, I did not mind the walk, Bella; I am tired, to be sure, but it will do me good rather than harm."

She looked into my face with one of her long searching looks. She is very like her brother when she looks so. Then, nodding contentedly, and saying she did not think it had hurt me, she carried me to the large sitting-room, with its cool white-washed walls, plain simple furniture, and clean concrete floor. There were boughs of green gum and wattle in the chimney, diffusing their refreshing fragrance, and a glass of flowers on the mantel-shelf; these were the only decorations of the room, for there were only short white curtains and dark green blinds at the windows. And these were drawn down to keep out the still powerful rays of the afternoon sun. A large old Bible covered with green baize lay on the window-ledge, and on the chair rested a pair

of spectacles. That book is the rule and guide of the household—loved and treasured as the last words of a dear friend. I know it, for I have seen its daily influence among them.

"Mother has gone to 'the Brae,' to Alex's place, you know. Father promised to drive her there before I left, and the day was so fine, so we shall have it all to ourselves. Kenneth is somewhere about with Maggie; in the garden, I fancy; she always follows him about like a shadow whenever he comes home. Dear fellow, I wish he could come more often; it must be very lonesome at Glen Aubin for him," said Bella; and she took me straight into her large quiet bedroom, with its immense white bed, its tall old-fashioned chests of drawers, its white matting and large unwieldy but most comfortable chairs, in one of which she placed me, taking off my hat and scarf and gloves as she talked, and brushing away the curls from my heated brow with her cool fingers—fingers that knew how to

charm away the headache if one had it. She then ran out of the room, returning almost instantly with a glass of rich milk and a single rice-cake.

"I have brought you nothing more to spoil your tea," she laughingly exclaimed; "for I have ordered it in half-an-hour. Kenneth and Maggie will be in by that time, and we can have it together. Besides, I have a little business to despatch with you before Mag comes in, and may as well get it over."

I wondered what was coming, but sat still, quietly drinking my milk and nibbling at my cake, and waiting.

"It was one of the very things Kenneth came to your house for the other day; but the foolish fellow did not like to speak of it after all. He wants to remove his children from Adelaide, Beattie, and wishes to know whether you will take them?"

"Why, of course we will," I answered, and

I suppose with widely opened eyes. Was it likely that we should refuse such an addition to our number and income? "I am sure mother will be only too glad," I exclaimed.

"So I told Kenneth, but he was afraid you would think them too young, and that they would be too much trouble. Anyway, it would be a great comfort both to him and to us to have the children so near, and in such good keeping. They are nice little things, Beattie; pretty children; only you know how badly they have been brought up, and the *cause;* poor Kenneth, he has had keen sorrow enough for many a year, ever since his most unhappy marriage."

"Yes; but he has strong faith," I answered; "he always seems to me so strong."

"He just takes God at His word—yes, dear, he does do that, and so should we all. What's the use of that word if we won't *believe* it? and if we *do* believe in it, why not be strong?" It was so like Bella to ask that.

"It seems strange to me that he can be so submissive after all the years of unhappiness, and the sad ending at the last," I presently said.

"Ah! but you do not know; the ending was the best of it. Light, after long years of darkness. The promise was fulfilled: 'Ask, and ye shall receive.' The way had been crooked, but it was made straight at last. My brother's wife died in the faith of a forgiving Saviour. Beattie, it is a great comfort to know that."

So even out of this bitter they manage to distil some sweets, while to me all my sorrows are unmitigated bitters. How is it? why should they always turn up the silver lining of their clouds, while to me only the heavy sable drapery is unfolded.

A bitter was it? yes; I should say intensely so to Kenneth Gordon. I have often heard the story; how he married young, won by a pretty face, and had led a miserable life ever since. I never knew all the particulars, but that his wife was

addicted to intemperance, neglected his house and her children, and made his life a wretched one; all this oozed out, notwithstanding the efforts made to conceal the skeleton. There is no doubt of *one* thing, that he is a thorough Christian; that he bore his wrongs in a Christian spirit. Bella says that they brought out his Christian graces most nobly; that faith grew stronger, and confidence firmer; and but for that strong trust in One who never fails, he must have sunk.

"You know," she said to me one day, "the grass is better for the pressure of the foot, and there is a sweet garden herb that never grows so abundantly or blossoms so profusely as when down-trodden."

There are some kinds of grass, however, that will not bear the impress of the foot, that wither and die under pressure; and there are both herbs and flowers too delicate to endure even the rude blast; that bow, and droop, and fade even before the summer's heat; Bella surely forgets

this. If these sorrows are "discipline," as she tells me, can what is good for me be also salutary to another of a widely different constitution? "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb." How perpetually does that sentence recur as though to answer my doubting questions—as a low refrain to what Bella says: "God knows all things, He therefore knows what is best for each."

Kenneth and Margaret came in to tea. It was very pleasant and social. The delicate rolls of home-made bread that Bella makes to such perfection; the white honey, fresh in its pure comb of virgin wax; the butter sweet and fragrant from the dairy; cream rich and yellow, and circular and golden jellies enough to tempt the appetite of an anchorite. And then the soft summer breeze stealing through the widely-open door and window, so fresh and pure. The sun had left the front of the house, and the up-drawn blinds revealed a far reach of quiet, calm scenery;

grassy paddocks so shadowed by clumps of trees, that beneath those shadows they were yet green, and beyond that a hilly slope, all dents and hollows, with foliage to its very height, huge boulders here and there breaking roughly out of its sides into fantastic shapes; here brown or slaty, there white with quartz, and there moss-grown. The sun fell among the tree-shadows and showed where the cattle were quietly feeding; and the song of the laughing jackass and magpie came down to us, softened by the distance, as we sat at tea.

The days are shortening so fast; after tea it was time to think of home. Kenneth brought his buggy round to the door, for they would not hear of my walking home, and he and Margaret went with me. There was just room for us, only just, and that only because, as Bell laughingly said, "I was such a little one." Nothing had been said about the children till just before we got into the buggy; then Bella suddenly seemed to remember, and exclaimed,—

"Ah, by the bye, Kenneth, Beattie says they will take your little ones; I told you she would."

He turned on me one of his searching looks.

"You will not think it too much trouble?"

"Certainly not," I answered; "we expect trouble with our pupils—trouble of some kind. I am sure mother will be glad."

"Thank you," was his simple answer; "I will see your mother at once."

Our ride home would have been rather a silent one, I fancy, but for Margaret. She is never silent, always merry and gay. We did not drive home the way that I had walked. Kenneth chose a longer way round. I wondered why at the time, but I guess now it was to avoid our old home. It was kind and thoughtful of him.

Mother has agreed to all the plans for the children. She will gladly receive them. They are two little girls and one little boy. The girls are ten and eight years old, the boy five. They have been neglected, ill-trained children, because unfortunately consigned to the care of such a

mother, and to such friends, and we may expect a trouble with them; but then, poor little things, they are greatly to be pitied, and they are so young; the twigs are pliant yet, and may be trained; so at least, dear mother says, and it will be a pleasure to try. In our well-regulated, well-ordered house, wholesome discipline must prove good for them.

Wholesome "discipline"—ah! that is what Bella talks of so much. "We are our Father's children," she says, "and each need the exercise of discipline." To one He sends a heavy bereavement, to another a wearying sickness; a scarcely ceasing, wearing cause of pain; but love sends, love administers, love "disciplines." This is *her* doctrine and *his*—Kenneth's, I mean.

CHAPTER IV.

KENNETH'S CHILDREN.

We have had a busy, exciting evening. Mother has gone to bed, very weary, I fear; and even Katie looks pale. I wish she was a little stronger; not, indeed, that she complains, but I fancy she has not been quite well lately. I suppose I have a tendency to look on the dark side of things; for, certainly, as I said, she never complains.

Kenneth's children are here—all three. He brought them himself, and his mother came with him. Nice children they are—pretty children, too, and not neglected past recall by any means; at least I think not. They are passionately fond of their father, and it is quite affecting to see how they cling round him. The boy, with his

head of light curls, and blue eyes, is especially like him. Annie, the second girl, resembles him too. She is both fair and sonsie; a little wilful, perhaps, but with a sweet smile which promises much. Isabella, the eldest, they say is the image of what her mother once was—dark and haughty; yet she will grow up a handsome woman, if I mistake not, and, properly guided, may make a good one. Ah, me! who is sufficient for these things? The ruling of these childish spirits is no trifle; the training of these young minds no easy task. For my part, I seem to need so much guiding myself, so much necessity for direction and light upon my own path, that even to take these little ones by the hand appears presumption. I know what Bella would say; that one is blessed in the work, that to labour for the good of others in any cause brings its own reward. I know, too, what Kenneth would be sure to add, that "God never appoints us work without a proportionate amount of strength to perform it."

It must be a happy thing to feel all this, to know it—not in theory, as I do, but in practice. The doing things "as for God" must make the work easy. I can understand what George Herbert meant when he said,—

> "Who sweeps a room as for thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine."

Ah, yes, I understand it all. But then it is for others, not for myself; and after all I take up the burden of life, and go struggling on.

I think I shall like these children, and they seem to have attached themselves to me already. Isabella and Annie sleep in the room adjoining mine. I have had it nicely cleaned out and fitted up for them. Two other girls share the room—Mary Holmes and Bessie Lee—girls of thirteen and fourteen years. I have had a cot placed for little Willie by the side of my own bed. He is a dear little fellow, loving and affectionate, though he has moments of strong self-will; yet I think he can be won with loving words and kind

actions. I do not despair of that. At any rate Kenneth Gordon seems well pleased that his children are with us. He told mother that a great burden was removed from his mind; that he had never liked their absence in town, or approved of those they were with—relations, they were, of his wife. He thanked her over and over again for taking the children, though he must know that in our circumstances every additional pupil is a gain. He goes back to Glen Aubin next week—so his mother told me. It is dreadfully lonely for him there, she said; but of course he has business to attend to, and necessity compels.

I am restless to-night, restless and uneasy; yet I am quite well—*physically* well. I went to bed quietly enough at the usual hour, but could not sleep. There was nothing left for me but either to toss and turn over my heated pillow, or to rise and light my lamp. I chose the latter alternative, and for the last hour I have been pacing

backwards and forwards on the verandah outside my window, wrapped in my dressing-gown, my feet thrust into my slippers, and my hair long and loose upon my shoulders—an object indeed to behold had any one been there to see. But there was only the quiet moon to look down and rebuke me for my unrest; the quiet moon and the steadfast stars, each in their little sphere performing their little duties, and so quietly, with such order, with such beauty. The clouds may come between—eh, so they do—but behind them the pure, clear shining goes on. Those clouds may dim and obscure for a time, they can never *quench* the steadfast flame.

That is beautiful to think of—it *rests* one. May it not be so with the light of God's love—even that love I so often recklessly doubt? May it not be that *earthly* clouds obstruct the clear shining, and prevent one discerning God's goodness? Sometimes in the darkness, when I think of these things, I can discern—but dimly, to be

sure, but in a measure—that there may be "a working together for good" in both past and present trials. And yet—and yet this is for those who love God to discern, and I have not learnt to love Him.

How can Kenneth trust his children to me? How can he hope that I shall "lead them to Jesus," when I scarcely know the way myself? or if, indeed, I *know* the way, do not tread in its paths.

"You will find out the beauty and love of God's discipline yet, Miss Beattie," he said in a loud voice, as he shook hands at parting. "It has, I know, seemed dark to you, and no wonder; but by and by you will see the 'bright shining.'"

I shook my head as he clasped my hands, and turning, sprang into the buggy. After all he may be right, though whether I *shall* ever be able to see it for myself seems doubtful.

This it is that staggers me. When I see those

who are so lonely in their lives living so near to God, following so closely in His footsteps, yet still suffering—so deeply suffering too—in pain and anguish, perhaps for years, or wrestling with bitter and humiliating poverty, or torn suddenly from wealth and position, or grievously and distressingly bereaved of their dearest ones, the unbelief rises up, and every power of reason exclaims, "Can this be a manifestation of God's love?"

I asked mother that question one evening when we were sitting alone together in the twilight, before the lamp was lighted. It was just after we came here, and everything was new and strange, excepting the furniture of our old home. She was seated in her large arm-chair, resting on its ample elbow, her cheek upon her hand, looking into the glowing firelight; but when I asked that question she turned her dear face round, and her soft dark eyes were filled with tears, as, fixing them lovingly on me, she answered,—

"Hey, Beattie, it *is* true—quite true; but our vision is finite, we do not know *all* things. Still I believe the words of Jesus, 'What we know not now we shall know hereafter,' and I am content to wait."

Yes, that is the true word for *her—content.* It beams in each of her gentle, loving smiles, it is visible in the depths of her fond eyes. *Content* even as a little unquestioning child. The *why* and the *wherefore* is hidden, but the confidence in divine love, and care, and guidance, is unshaken.

After all it is *faith* that is wanting. With that it would be comparatively easy to see, to understand, to do as mother does—patiently await the end.

What a glorious day it has been, one of our autumnal beauties, with sun and air exquisitely tempered; all autumnal in the fading of its vines and fruit-trees. Yet there is something sad in the fall of the leaves. One in-

stinctively turns to the evergreens, that never fail us.

Those creepers that Kenneth planted are fresh and beautiful, fast growing up the sides of the arbour against which he placed them. The spring is close by, and it has been easy to water them, which he told me was requisite till the early rains set in. Those on dear father's grave are in perfection, so are the violets. Some one diligently attends to them, by Kenneth's orders, I fancy. He is very kind, and mother thinks much of the attention. She told him so the other evening; but what a look he turned upon her as he grasped her hand.

"I owe more to your dear husband's memory than I can ever repay," he answered in low tones. "I shall never forget him."

Dear father lives enshrined in many a heart, not for his eloquent *words*, but for his eloquent *life*. Like his Master, he went about doing good, "sowing broadcast." We are always hearing of

some one to whom his words have been made a blessing. What a starry crown will he have to cast at his Saviour's feet.

I can scarcely believe that Kenneth's children are peacefully slumbering beneath our roof. Childhood looks very lovely asleep. The perfect repose of the limbs, the sweet peace of the features, make it so. I looked at little Willie just now, all rosy with sleep, as he lay far back on his pillow, one little hand thrown forward on the coverlet, his golden curls damp with slumber, and his sweet rosebud mouth parted in a smile. What happy dreams were passing his innocent vision? "In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My father," were the Saviour's own words. It is one of the *mysteries,* Bella says, that will be solved by and by. Happy childhood to be so divinely protected, if such be the meaning.

One—two o'clock. Surely this is not right? These night vigils can tend to nothing good. If

I could only sleep—forget and sleep. Oh for that *panacea,* a peaceful mind! Well, I must put out my night-lamp, at any rate, and try once more to woo the slumber that is so coy in her approaches. The moon has gone, and all without is dark and slumberous. Perhaps now I may slumber too.

CHAPTER V.

OUR HOME CIRCLE.

Our schoolroom is a very pleasant one, looking full, as I once before said, into our lovely bowery garden. A framework of white jessamine encircles one window, filling the room with its fragrance, and rustling its delicate painted leaves and curling tendrils with every breath of wind. Just now, in our late autumn, it is full of its starlike flowers. The other window is embraced by a yellow banksia. I like it with its perfect little roses, and tiny delicate buds in clusters, and its splendid green foliage; like it even when the wind, wandering rather roughly through it, scatters the blossoms, and showers the tiny morsels of yellow

leaves within and without. Molly would have us cut it down.

"It is sadly littery," she says, "and makes a fearful mess."

"Oh, never mind, Molly," I reply, laughing; "the leaves are perfect little beauties, and we can soon clear them away."

I sometimes set the children to gather up the yellow morsels; it is fine fun to them. They make tiny brooms of the branches of the weeping cypress. It is pleasant to hear the merry ring of their childish voices as they gather their little heaps of leaves together, and presently find them scattered by the wind. Ah! if *we* could only take as merrily, as joyously, the scattering of our heaps of happiness—*our* little morsels of gold.

Mother has not been well lately. We have had to nurse her most carefully, to shelter her from every more than ordinary wind. She is a precious mother to us; what can we do without her? I have trembled at the bare idea, the bare possi-

bility of losing her. I think she has taken cold; she was always delicate, and we have had some cold winds lately, that have rudely stripped the poplars of their leaves, scattered the last of my banksia roses, and swept round and round the house, penetrating wherever there was a possibility of their doing so. Worse than all, they brought dear mother her old weary cough and weakness. Katie has often to leave all the school work to me, that she may wait on the dear invalid, though she protests against it, and says Molly's attentions are quite sufficient. But Molly, kind and doatingly fond of dear mother as she is, cannot possibly give the necessary attention; she has so much else to do. Besides, we could not consent to be both absent. Dr. Hutton says that a change to Adelaide would be the best thing for her if we could but persuade her to think so. And she could so well go. We have many friends who would gladly welcome her amongst them.

"Well, perhaps, by and by, when the holidays come," she says, with her quiet smile. And she is so loving and patient that it makes me fearful that the "wings are unfolding for the upward flight."

I was speaking of our schoolroom, and said it was a pleasant one. A very pleasant one it is, even now that the banksia roses have left us, and dry dead leaves are falling everywhere; for the scent of the violets comes in when we can bear the window open, and even when it is so cold that open windows are out of the question. The fire burns brightly on the large clean hearth—not one of those enormous cavities that so many of our country houses boast of, and which take so much fuel (such a one, indeed, there is in our own kitchen, in which Molly glories)—but a neat square fireplace, with a slightly raised hearth, pure and white, round which we have placed a rather high brass fender, before that again a large old-fashioned knitted cloth rug—Molly's

work in past days, of which she is exceedingly proud.

The room is large, so are the windows. Beneath that at the sides stretches a long but not very wide table. The elder girls sit here on either side. The other, a bow window, is especially mine. There stands my little table, with its drawers for work and manuscript. A low flat maple desk lies on the top, and always a vase of flowers, dispensing both perfume and beauty. A curious little vase it is, nestled in a basket of Indian manufacture. I am very fond of it, and it is never empty; the children vie with each other in filling it day by day.

Another table goes down the centre. Here all the younger children sit, with either Katie or me at the head. There are long neat book-shelves on either side the fireplace, and books in abundance, many far beyond the reach of the intellect of the pupils. Old books, too, some of them, of dear father's—Greek and Latin, more valuable for

their interior than their exterior. Geoffrey alone takes pleasure in these things. He ought to be studying for the ministry, but that is out of the question. Yet I know dear father wished it. I know that his own heart yearns after it. I sometimes see dear mother look wistfully at him as he sits opposite to her in the evening, just under the lamp, with elbows on the table, and his head resting in his hands, absorbed, perfectly absorbed, in his Hebrew Bible, half-a-dozen other books of study by his side.

When he enters the house at night, and changes his coat for the loose garment he particularly affects, it is as though he shook off business with the dust of his feet, and lovingly took up the studies he so much rejoices in. He is a great comfort to mother. She looks so cheered when he comes in, and bends down his tall head, as he always does, to kiss her. That he never omits.

What a different fellow Otto is, with his curly hair and laughing blue eyes. He is certainly the

life of the family, if he is also its care. We always know when he is coming home. As soon as he turns the corner of the road we hear him, either his loud yet sweet whistle, or his fine voice singing at its utmost pitch. "It gives us warning of his approach," he says. He is a wild, rackety fellow, but withal an affectionate one; and if he does cause dear mother anxiety, and sometimes sorrow, she cannot help forgiving it all when he throws his arms round her neck and silences her with kisses.

Otto is not studious like Geoffrey, but he loves music, and plays for hours on the little harmonium in the parlour; that is, when he is at home; but he is fond of society, and society is fond of him. That voice of his is in request at every gathering, and we often never see him till late at night, or at breakfast in the morning. There is only eighteen months between them, and both under twenty; yet they are widely different, for one is a Christian, the other is *not*.

Otto and I, Geoffrey and Kate. Thus are we divided. The oldest and youngest are mother's greatest source of trouble now. It is so, but why is it? Why should *we* find it so hard to believe, so easy to yield to the world and its temptations? Easy! No; it is not all ease. And sometimes even I can subscribe to the truth of those words, "The way of transgressors is hard." Yet, what *are* these transgressions of mine? Nothing very venial. Yet I know what Kenneth Gordon would say, that not loving where the love should be bestowed, not yielding the heart where the heart should be yielded, giving that to the things *created* which the *Creator* should alone possess, is transgression enough; and I *know* it.

His children are getting on well with us, and gradually we are getting them into training. Poor little things, they have indeed been badly looked after, and it requires time to undo all the evil that bad example, and unwholesome food,

and low associations, have produced. Still, love can do much, and is doing it. I always thought that Katie was better calculated to win young hearts than I; and they do cling round her as I anticipated; her soft, loving ways and dimpling smiles compel them to love her in return. I knew it would be so, but I scarcely thought they would love me too; and yet they do. They go to her in all their joyousness; she shares in their romps, their games, their pleasures; but they come to me in all their little troubles, and so we divide the work between us.

Kenneth has not been down from the station once since he left his children with us. Their Aunt Maggie often comes to see them, and their grandma has been two or three times. But they are very happy, and he is content; indeed, I believe he cannot possibly leave the station at this period of the year. Rain is wanted badly, and the sheep are suffering for want of water. All his forethought and energy are needed to supply the lack.

Bella is still absent, but she will soon be home. I am very glad, for, in spite of long letters, I have missed her terribly. There is something so strong and muscular in her Christianity, no wavering, no distrust. I think some of the spirit of the old Scotch Covenanters from whom she claims descent must possess her, as I think it does her brother. Yes, had Kenneth lived in those far-off days, no King Charlie, or his emissaries, would have compelled him to be an Episcopalian. He would have been stanch to the backbone, even as he is now.

A lovely season we have had, notwithstanding cold winds and complaints of "no rain," which have been universal. But these complaints will not last long, for to-night the wind goes sighing round and round the house, with a low moaning monody, which foretells the coming moisture. I do not like rainy weather, yet it is so needful. Ah, I suppose that is a lesson for me. Our sorrows have a "needs be" in them all—so they would tell me—and with that I will close my

book and go to bed, where everybody else has been long ago.

Hark! there are rain-drops, surely. Ah! and that is a flash of lightning, followed by the usual low, rolling harbinger of a storm. Rain! yes in abundance now. How it pours. The country generally will rejoice at this—Kenneth's poor sheep, at any rate. If the storm is so general that it reaches his station, the water-holes will soon be overflowing.

CHAPTER VI.

OUR WEE PET LAMB.

THE house is still and silent—a stillness I can scarcely endure. I have been sent off to get some rest. Rest! I was never farther from it, and for the last few moments I have done nothing but walk up and down our deserted schoolroom.

The shadow of heavy sickness is on our house. For the last month we have known nothing but fatigue and anxiety. The fever that has visited the neighbourhood at last entered our household. We were presently in confusion. The yet untouched of our number were taken off to their own homes. School was of course dismissed,

and our whole thoughts concentrated in waiting on the sick, and keeping separate those that were well and out of the danger of infection. Kenneth's children remained. They had nowhere else to go; for Bella was absent, and their grandmamma far from well. For a long time we hoped they were escaping the infection. It was not so. One after another they were stricken, just as the two first patients were convalescent and able to be removed to their homes.

We have had a terrible time of it. Isabel was first attacked. The doctor considered she had it mildly; but she was a dreadful child to manage in her sickness; so restless, so impatient, so imperious, that it added to our care. I alone could induce her to swallow her medicine, and she would only take any food from my hand. She fretted if I was a moment absent. Poor child, she scarcely knew what she wanted; it was new to her to be ill, and new to us to manage children. She was better, however, and able to sit up in the

parlour by the fire, in the large easy chair, before little Annie was attacked.

Poor little Annie, fair and laughing Annie, how she suffered! The fever ran very high, and she was so dangerously ill that we had to send a messenger to her father. We carefully nursed her amongst us, bathing the little unconscious head, removing the fair curling ringlets, and anxiously wooing her back to life.

In the midst of it all Bella returned home, and came straight to us. What a welcome we gave her! What a comfort she was! How we rejoiced in her coming; how at least I rejoiced. She seemed so calm, so self-possessed, so trustful in other than human help; for she seeks God's guidance in everything, and never seems afraid, that it gives one courage to see her. If I only had her hope and confidence! but it is not to be purchased, not to be given except by God. How is it that I desire and yet never obtain?

We stand together the evening of her arrival by little Annie's bedside, watching the heavy restless slumber, listening to the delirious murmur, and longing for Kenneth. The messenger had been sent the day before, so we were looking for him.

"It will be such a blow for him if he does not arrive in time," she said in a low voice. "Bitter enough at any time it would be, but more so if too late."

"But Bella, darling, you do not think there is no hope? Children, they say, can go through so much, and yet recover."

"I know," said Bella softly; "but this darling is very ill. It is possible that she may recover. To-night will be the test—the crisis of the fever. In any case it will be as our Father wills, and His will is best."

"Oh, Bella!" I exclaimed amid my tears, "do you think it could be *well* for your brother to arrive too late, to miss even that poor consola-

tion of seeing his child once more before he lost her for ever? He who is so truly God's servant, so anxious to do His will—so truly good."

"It would be bitter trouble to him, dear Beattie, no doubt of that; but even out of the trial God can bring blessedness. He does not suffer His children to be tempted beyond their ability. With the trial comes the way of escape. You have that lesson to learn yet, my poor Beattie."

"Eh, and many another. I am a dull scholar, and hard to understand these things; and yet I want to know."

All through the night we watched together by the side of our sick little one, the moaning and the delirium never ceasing, and the fever burning furiously. The doctor came in at midnight, and did what he could for us; but he held out small hopes of recovery. All would depend on the crisis of the disorder. The next hour or two would decide that; we were waiting for it.

And through the silent night, broken only in

its silence by the delirious mutterings of the child, or the sighing of the wind without, we listened for the horse's footstep, for a sign of his coming.

If only he would come! if God would only spare the darling! My heart felt weary with the intensity of the desire. I leaned my head on the foot of the bed, and must surely have fallen asleep, for I was aroused by Bella's hand on my shoulder, and a low "hush!" as I arose in some confusion.

"Have I really been asleep?" I whispered regretfully.

"Yes, dear, for half-an-hour. And no wonder. You must be quite worn out. But oh, Beattie, while you slept, the crisis, I believe, has passed."

Passed, indeed. There was a wonderful change. The delirious murmurings had ceased, the wild eye closed, and the breathing, so low that it never even stirred the feathers that lay

on the coverlet near the parched fevered lips. Change—yes certainly a change; but was it not from life to death? I clasped my hands and shook all over.

"Ah, Bella, is this death?" I exclaimed in agony.

"No, not death, but sleep. I believe the worst is past. We may bless God for His goodness, dear Beattie. I think He has given back this little one to us."

We watched with beating, thankful hearts now, tremblingly alive still to the very slender thread upon which life hung suspended; and as we watched, in the mysterious hour of earliest dawn came the sound of a horse's feet rapidly along the hard road.

"He is coming!"

"Kenneth!"

We both exclaimed in low whispers. I grew faint and cold. What was the matter with me? Was I going to give way, and make myself use-

less after all! I held on to the bedpost, and struggled with my weakness.

I do not think Bella noticed me, for she made no remark.

"I will go down and let him in," she whispered. And I was thankful that she did so, for I could not have done it. I heard the horse stop at the large white gates and then led off to the stable, and knew that in another minute he would be in the room.

I was better when he did come in, booted and spurred as he was, pale with anxiety and fatigue, but looking so thankful. His sister had told him of the change. How glad I felt for him.

"She will live now," I managed dreamily to falter, as he took my hand in his firm clasp and wrung it. What a strange feeling came over me. I remember it now. A fading away of all things, a dimness, and a darkness, and a distance. Where was I? Had I fallen asleep again? How peculiar an awakening? Frequent waters were on

my forehead. Strong hands were supporting me. Was it a dream—the whole anxiety, and weariness, and watching?

. "She has been doing too much, Bella." It was Kenneth's voice, and the words were reproachful."

"Yes, I see; I know, but I only reached home to-day. I came here directly. It is the anxiety of the last few hours, as well as the long watching and the weariness."

"Yes, she is over-wrought. At any rate, she *must* rest now. Poor child! she is utterly wearied out. Shall I carry her straight to her room, Bella?"

But I was gaining sense and strength now, and attempted to rise.

"Lie still, dear Beattie; lie still till you are better," said Bella.

And I did lie quietly among the cushions they had heaped upon the sofa, dreamily watching them as they stole about the room, Bella providing

refreshment for her brother, or bending over the little sleeper, and now and then coming to me.

"If you could only sleep like your little patient," said Kenneth, bringing me a restorative, which he insisted upon my taking. "I think you could, if you were away from this."

I suppose I looked timidly towards the little one, for he continued,—

"She still sleeps. I think our Father has spared her to me, and next to Him I have *you* to thank for all your care."

There were tears in the eyes that looked down on me. Tears in *his* eyes! How he must love his children. What a good father he is.

The dawn came stealing through the lifted curtain, and our little Annie still slept.

"She will recover," Bella whispered at last, as she bent over me with a kiss; "and now, dear Beattie, you must leave her to our care. Kenneth says you will be ill next. Go to bed, dear, and sleep. We shall need you in the morning."

And with that assurance I slowly went off; but I was too tired to undress. Throwing myself on my bed, I sank immediately into heavy slumber. The sun was high, and stealing brightly into my room when I awoke. I sprang up in alarm. How had all prospered in the sick-room? I hurriedly bathed my face in the cool fresh water, and sought to obliterate the marks of anxiety and watching, that I might be fit for work again.

Katie came into my room while I was brushing out my hair.

"I have slept so heavily, and no one awoke me," I exclaimed reproachfully. How is Annie?"

"Annie is getting on well — very weak, of course; but now the crisis is passed, and the danger over; but, Beattie, our dear little Willie is stricken, and, worse than all, it is malignant scarlet fever. The doctor holds out small hopes."

Even so. Our funniest, our merriest, our

sweetest, who had lately become the pet of the whole household. And now was he about to be taken from us?

Hastily tying my hair away from my face with a ribbon, and throwing on a dressing-gown, I hurried to the room I had so lately left.

Dear little Willie! they were cutting off his fair ringlets as I entered. How a few hours have changed the darling! A few hours more, and the wee pet lamb would be missing from the flock; yes, I saw it plainly now.

Poor father, pale, stricken, but not crushed; even yet, though the compressed lips told of the anguish within. Will ye be yet able to feel that the hand that smites is a hand of love?

CHAPTER VII.

THE DISCIPLINE OF SICKNESS.

I HAVE been listening to the rain-drops splashing on my windows for the last hour. Sometimes beating on the panes with a little musical murmur of their own, sometimes driven in sudden gusts by the wind, drifting furiously against the impediments to their entrance, and shaking the framework of the windows with the wind that brought them. The rose branches scratch up and down the glass, and one or two half-blown monthly roses bruise their fair leaves against it.

A little further out I can see the big, bright, shining drops as they gather and form and fall at

last, one after another, from the eaves of the verandah. Cold enough without, no doubt, but not so within. A bright wood fire glows on my ample hearth. The thick shea-oak log sends forth a rich warmth that fills the room pleasantly. The lounge on which I am lying is drawn within its cheerful warmth; and yet I can lie and watch the wave of the trees, and the floating clouds, and the raindrops; while within my reach, on a little stand, are books, a trifle of work, and one or two delicacies.

These hands of mine, so white and transparent, what a tale they tell; a tale of sickness very severe and wearing, out of which I am slowly coming back to life.

I do not know how ill I have been; but, judging only from the wreck it has made me, I should think the sickness must have been very severe, worse than I have ever had in my life before. I only know that to me it has been a time of fear, moments of intense suffering, wild horror, and

oblivion. The shadow of death has passed over me, and I *live.*

Am I thankful? Is the prisoner thankful that his freedom is regained? Is the doomed man rejoiced at a reprieve? Thus, then, do I welcome back the slowly-returning life-current, and am grateful that I, too, have not been cut down as the barren fig-tree, but am spared another year.

"For what? Eh, for what?"

I can recall it all now. Yes; with returning strength memory is also returning, and I can recollect how this illness of mine occurred.

I had been over-worked, and over-wrought, as Kenneth said; there is no doubt of that. That last evening of anxiety with little Annie, before her father came, had been very intense, though I little thought how great the reason till the relief came. The heavy sleep that followed had not refreshed me, and the tidings that met me on my awakening shook my already tried nerves.

Little Willie stricken, and so suddenly. Yet,

perchance, had we not been too much engrossed with Annie's illness, we might have been forewarned by the heavy eye, the crimsoning cheeks, and sleepiness of the little fellow, who "had been so good and so quiet all day," as the woman who had come to assist in the house, and with the children, had in her ignorance declared.

Before morning, and while I was sleeping heavily, the darling child was discovered sitting up in his little bed in all the delirium of fever—fever which soon made itself apparent in its most malignant form.

So Kenneth was taken, in the midst of his quiet thanksgivings, for the spared life of one of his motherless little ones, to the bedside of his beautiful boy, on whose face the warrant of death was already written.

That day! ah, that day! How did we ever get through it? Even now I see Kenneth, quiet, grave, and gentle in his nursing. Now and then his pale lips moving in prayer for the little one

who unceasingly cried for him, and yet knew not that he was constantly by him, smoothing his pillow, holding him in his arms, bathing his burning head, giving drink to the parched and burnt-up lips, or administering the necessary medicine.

All in vain. By evening, the wild delirium sank into low muttering, and then followed heavy stupor; and then we watched and waited, and prayed, till with the first peep of day the little soul took its flight.

I turned to Kenneth in my terrible distress and stretched out my hands. I know not whether the words left my lips; if not, my eyes must have said,—

"Is it well—*now?*"

"Yes," he answered, in his low firm voice; "it *is* well—well with my boy. I have yet to learn how well for me. Beattie, the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken—it must be right—it must be well."

So through all that heavy trial did Kenneth,

like Job, sustain his integrity. He did not charge God foolishly. But, alas! my thoughts were very, very bitter.

All that day I roamed about restlessly from room to room. A dull, heavy pain in my head, and a strange aching through my limbs. They would not allow me to take any further share in the nursery, but I could not rest as they begged me to do. Rest! I was never further off rest in my life before. Sometimes, indeed, for a few moments I threw myself on a sofa, and lost all thought in heavy, drowsy slumber; but for the greater portion of the day I wandered up and down as though I longed to be free, and could not shake off my chains.

They placed the little darling in his coffin, and between his tiny hands I laid my one pet camellia with its twin buds fair and spotlessly white; but by morning the change was great, and they carried him away for burial to the same little graveyard where my precious father lies.

I watched them from the window. The sad procession wound slowly round the road. The agonizing pain in my head increased as I stood there; heavy, heavy throbs of pain, and my hands were chill as death. I felt dizzy—reeling —then came a long blank—and then a terrible awakening to pain, and fear, and darkness, a contention with unknown elements, a wild endeavour to escape from unknown foes.

It was Kenneth, they say, who found me, on his return from his darling's funeral, just as I had fallen in an unconscious heap at the window from which I had watched them go forth. It was his outcry that brought the rest to me.

My mother. How meekly she bore it all. Yet well I knew what must have been her agony when I was in danger. I asked her yesterday if she had feared that I should die.

"Ah, Beattie, my child," she answered, her pale face growing still paler, "I could give your dear father up into the Saviour's hands, for I

knew—I *knew* he was safe; but *you*—ah, Beattie, to yield you up without a word or sign, I could not—could not bear it. If you are ever a mother you will know how dreadful it must be to part with a child with whom you have no hope of meeting again."

Ah, poor mother! I knew well what her agony must have been. Yet what is it that renders me so hard, so unimpressible? Am I nearer realizing my mother's desire? Have I gained by suffering? Can I yet acknowledge Jesus as my king—and that what He does is right—as my brother—as Kenneth does? No, no. It is all blackness—all darkness. I cannot realize the love. I can see no silver lining to the clouds. My heart is heavy within me. And I—I am a rebel still.

They have carried my mother away for a rest and a change, and Katie has gone with her. Our old nurse is helping Molly to take care of me, and Alice Monteith is here. What a pretty girl she

is, with her soft fair hair, and her sweet blue eyes; gentle and loving, as well as pretty. I am glad she is here for the sake of the boys. It would be very dull for them without her. At least it would be so for our quiet home-loving Geoffrey. Otto is so often absent, that he would not feel it so much. Dear Alice—she, with her quiet grace—will make some one an invaluable wife. Her mother has trained her well. Sometimes I catch Geoffrey's eyes upon her with a deep admiring glance; it may be, perhaps, the beginning of more than friendship with him. But then the Monteiths have plenty of this world's wealth. Would they be likely to give their child to one who has so little besides a loving heart and willing hands to bestow?

Poor Geoffrey! What a kind brother he is. How earnestly he has prayed for me. He does not ask if it shall be so; but morning and evening, now mother is absent, he comes to my room with Alice and nurse, and Molly, his little Bible in his

hand. How warm the words of sacred writ came from his young lips; how beautifully simple, yet earnest and faithful, are the words of his prayer. Poor boy! and I cannot reward him by showing that I feel.

Kenneth came yesterday evening. The sight of his mourning brought the tears to my eyes. I could scarcely speak to him at first.

"You have been very ill, dear Beattie," he presently said, as he took my thin hand in his own, holding it a moment there, and looking sadly at its thinness and pallor.

"Yes, I believe I have, but I am getting better now."

"Bless God for that," he answered low and deep; "He has been gracious amidst all."

"To *you?*" I could not help it; the doubting words would come.

"Yes, to *me*. Does it seem strange to you that I should say so? Beattie, He has not hurt my boy. He has only taken him away from my arms

into His own far more loving and tender ones. I cannot see from what evil he may have been rescued, but I shall know hereafter, and I shall see my boy again." His face lighted up with the confidence of his words, and I laid my head down to hide my tears.

"He was a brave, bright boy," he presently continued, "the flower of my little flock. I had built up a fine future for him, but the Lord had ordered it differently. He wanted the flower to bloom in His own garden—the wee lamb to be sheltered in His own fold, where storms and rough winds cannot come—therefore He took it. I shall see more fully *why* some day, and I am content to wait."

Content—content—always that word. But I could not, for worlds, have spoken to him just then.

"He taketh the lambs in His bosom," he murmured half to himself, so has He done with my wee pet lambie. It was all in love." He rose

and went to the window, and stood looking out into the garden. The rain was passing off, and as he stood there the sun came shining through the wet leaves and fell upon him, throwing his fine tall figure into deep relief. How firm he looked, how steadfast, just as he really was—every inch a Christian.

The wind went fitfully round the house, sighing as it went, and the rose-leaves beat against the window. How loudly the little clock on the mantle seemed to tick in the silence, for we were very still after that. He, busy with the past, may be with the little one in the quiet graveyard; I with my own sad thoughts, my own restless moods. The sun was sinking in the west; it went down presently behind a bank of clouds, and the twilight deepened through the room, till the fitful jets of firelight sent dancing shadows on the walls and ceiling. The silence and the thoughts were almost more than I could bear.

Kenneth perhaps divined this, for he presently came back from the window to my side.

"God has been very merciful to *you*, Beattie," he said, after a moment, as he stood on the hearth-rug with the firelight falling upon him.

"Yes—in sparing my life. I was not fit to die," I replied, in a half-choked voice, and a memory of the danger and the dread came over me, bringing the tears with it.

"He has given you your life, and will you not yield Him your love?" he gently asked; for he sympathized, I knew, with my distress. "He has spared you for better things than despair. This sickness has been a messenger from Him. Can you not receive it as such?"

I could not have answered him, even had not the opportunity passed away, as so many opportunities will pass. Molly came in with the lamp and the tea-tray, and Geoffrey, Alice, and Otto presently followed. Otto, with his lively sallies, made it very merry. In the shadow where I lay

they could not see the traces of tears in my eyes, and the evening passed cheerfully away. I, in my weakness, was privileged to be quiet, and I thought it immaterial, till Otto, as he bent down to lift me in his arms, and help me to my room, knowingly whispered,—

"I say, Beattie, don't let our friend there put any melancholy ideas into your head. It's jolly to see you so well, and able to be up a bit. Never fear, you will soon be all right again, whoever may croak to the contrary."

CHAPTER VIII.

ABSENCE AND RETURN.

It was delicious to get back to life, and away from the very atmosphere in which the sickness had been passed; and yet, after all, I rather shrank from leaving home. That was decided for me. We had taken a long vacation, and on mother and Katie's return some other old friends of my father's sent a warm invitation to me. "I must come and get well and strong with them," they said; and as they had a lovely home, within a pleasant distance of the sea-beach, it was considered by all a happy providence, and I prepared to go. Well was it that I did so, for I was sinking into a low, weak state, and needed the

[illegible] atmosphere not only of sea-breezes, but of new scenes and faces.

They were kind friends who welcomed me, and loving attentions that were lavished upon me; and yet, as the weeks went by, and my strength came back, I longed for the dear old home, with a deep yearning that would not be satisfied.

A clear bright sunshine was bringing the flowers in the garden into being, and making our house look lovely, when the same kind friends brought me home again restored in health and strength, and quite ready to resume my duties. Paint and wall-paper had done much to remove all atmosphere of the past, and our house was more delightful than ever, particularly so it seemed after my long absence. Kind friends, loving attention, tender and affectionate nursing, were all subjects for gratitude; but "mother and home," those two words had been chiming like sweetly loved bells in my ears the last three days,

and the first glimpse of the old gables was an intense, a concentrated delight.

They were all there—the dear home faces, mother, Katie, Geoffrey, and Otto—all standing at the door to welcome me, as we drove up the side walk, the evening sunlight gleaming through the trees, and pouring the after-glow of sunset upon the windows.

"Oh, Otto, how beautiful you all look," I could not help exclaiming as he ran forward to lift me down.

He laughed merrily.

"I suppose," he replied, still laughing, as I almost danced along, clinging to his arm. "I suppose that joy is a beautifier; but with all these veilings and shawlings, I haven't a chance yet to return the compliment, or to see how *well* and strong you have become."

"Well," I replied brightly, "I am quite, *quite* well, and ready for all sorts of talk and work." But dear mother had the rest of my words and

kisses, and then Geoffrey and Kate claimed their share. And then we entered our little sitting-room—a laughing, joyous group—where the bright little fire gleamed on the hearth with its sheen of welcome, though the open window let in the closing sunbeams and the sweet fragrance of spring flowers.

"The children are all back again," said Kate, as in a few moments after she lovingly waited on me, removing wraps, and pouring out the fragrant water to refresh me after my journey. It was so pleasant to return to my own little white bedroom.

"They have?" I answered; "the darlings; but where are they?"

"Ah, they are not here this evening. Alice Monteith contrived a little fête of some kind on purpose that they might be absent this first evening of your return. Wasn't it kind of her? They will not return till to-morrow."

"Of course it is kind, and thoughtful, and

just like Alice; for though I have been longing to see the dear children, it is nice to have you all first."

"The two new girls are very pretty and docile too. I don't know much about their intellectual capacity," continued Kate; "however, that will be easily discovered," she added, laughing, and watching me as I wound the last coiling hair round my head, and fastening it, stood ready to go back with her to the tea-table.

On the hearthrug, with his elbow resting on the chimney-piece, stood Kenneth Gordon. They had not told me he was there; but I knew him though he stood in the growing shadow, by that very position, a favourite one of his. He came forward as I entered, with outstretched hands.

"You did not expect to see me, I suppose?" he replied to my exclamation of surprise. "I came to bring the children, and Miss Monteith did not consider it necessary to include me in

her invitation, so I remained to welcome you home."

"Very good of you," I answered, with the uncomfortable feeling that my face was sadly flushed.

"How well she looks, does she not, Kenneth?" Otto mischievously observed. "You have taken the sea-breezes to some purpose, Beattie."

"Well, yes; she does look well. I have not seen her look so well since I have known her."

"I think I ought to look well with all the kind care and nursing I have had," I answered laughingly; "but I am very hot now"—I felt so with my flushed cheeks—"that may contribute to my look of extreme health."

Hot or cold, however, there was no disguising it, I was really well, and lighter-hearted than I had been for months past, for I felt that I was home again, and surrounded by all that were dearest to me.

There was not a single thing to mar that even-

ing's pleasant enjoyment. Geoffrey and Otto both at home, mother and Katie looking so well and happy, and Kenneth's unexpected presence. It was all like a pleasant dream, yet real enough too, so full of lively talk, and merry laughter, and bursts of fun. Ah, it was so delightful to be at home once more, and to have such a welcome. I felt it thrilling through every nerve.

As I stood a little while after tea under the verandah looking out on the calm moonlight that lay dreaming over the trees and flowers and hedgerows, the breath of the roses on those hedgerows came to me, borne on the slight breeze of night; all was so quiet, so balmy, so peaceful.

"You remember the slips I planted some time ago?" It was Kenneth's voice that asked the question. I did not know that he had followed me out.

"Yes," I answered, as well as I could for my surprise.

"You must look at them to-morrow; they have grown finely, and your sister tells me they are bursting into blossom."

"The soil is rich, and you were so very particular over planting them; they have been carefully watched and watered too," I answered. "But it is so light," I continued, "let us go and see them now."

"Yes, if you will wait while I go and get you a shawl," he replied quietly; "invalids must not be *too* venturesome."

"Invalids? but I am not an invalid *now*. I am well and strong, and have quite done with being fussed over."

He brought me the shawl nevertheless, and I put it over my head, though I slightly rebelled at so doing; it was really delicious to feel the soft, sweet breeze blowing on me.

Was that the spot where the slips were planted? and were those the veritable slips, grown straight and tall, throwing out innumerable

graceful tendrils and branches, and fast climbing to the top of the trellis against which they had been placed?

"What a change a few weeks can make?" I cried in astonishment; "to think that in those little dry sticks there should have been so much vitality."

"Ah, the *life* was there, and therefore followed the foliage; that's it, Beattie. Had those sticks possessed no sap, there would have been neither leaves nor blossoms."

"And if there had been no rich soil to receive them, and no careful gardener, the results would have been far different," I said, feeling that I must say something, for I guessed at a little of his meaning.

"No doubt, no doubt; in general, the richer the soil, the fairer the fruit, but not always. There are plants that are better for a poor soil and hardy culture, that grow and thrive best in adversity."

"I suppose there are, but it seems very strange," I answered, turning towards the house. I knew what he meant, but just then I did not want him to put it in plainer language. I had nothing to tell him. I had come home with renewed health and spirits, glad and joyous to have it so, and ready for anything; but the "fruits of the spirit" had not prospered, the tendrils were still earthward. The "branch yet bore no fruit." So I drew my shawl closely round me, and made a diversion by complaining of the cold; and he hurried me in fast enough then, bringing me to the warmest seat at the fire, where I was soon almost too warm, not only from the glow of its embers, but from the anxious glances that I knew every now and then were turned upon me.

Why does this man take so much trouble to discover my inmost feelings? I do not know that I quite like it. And yet he is so kind, so sympathizing, so ready to go anywhere, or do

anything to add to one's happiness, that I suppose it would be ungrateful to resent his words or pratings, which, after all, are kindly meant.

CHAPTER IX.

KATIE'S SECRET.

I THINK there is no season like spring, and certainly no place like the country to enjoy it. Sweet perfumes, sweet sounds, sweet harmonies of all kinds, fill the air with a delicious freshness; even the saddest heart must feel a little of their influence. I heard Katie, a few moments ago, as she stood amidst a group of admiring little ones, giving them the benefit of her own sweet thoughts on the subject in those beautifully poetical words of Solomon.

"The winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds has come, the voice of the turtle

is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell."

"All so beautiful and true," I heard her say, in her soft, full tones; "the sunshine clear shining after rain; the 'flowers so profuse, their rich odours filling the air, the song of the birds;' the magpie's gushing, joyous, wild carolling; the little 'shepherd's companion' with its bursts of melody; the thousand twittering notes of birds rejoicing; and the bursting of leaf and bud, the young green figs, the tender vines, all fragrant with blossom, just such as Solomon delighted in, in those far off days. Do you not see and hear all this, my darlings, as well as he did? He, the king, the ruler over a vast people, yet enjoying the beauty of spring as much as you do, and above all, loving the Giver of this beauty."

They moved off then beyond my hearing, but presently I heard her sweet voice leading them in

a song of glad praise, as though she too loved to look from nature to nature's God.

Dear Katie, so good and so fair, how we shall miss her when she leaves us! If I have ever dreamt of the possibility of this, it has been so very remote a possibility that it has not troubled me. But yesterday a change came over the scene.

It was a bright, beautiful Sunday morning, and we started off for chapel with our little flock as usual. The weather was so lovely, that not one was absent; Katie and I leading the way with the children, mother and the boys following behind. We had just reached the chapel when we saw a gentleman in ministerial habiliments dismounting at its gates. As he gave his horse into the hands of one of the young men who came forward to receive it, he caught sight of us, and came eagerly forward.

"Mr. Barnard! I little expected see *you* here," exclaimed my mother, warmly shaking

his hand, and then turning to introduce me and the boys. I remembered him then as the son of the friends she and Katie had visited while I was in the convalescent stage—the minister son of whom I had often heard, and always in terms of high praise, but had never seen. He needed no introduction to Katie, that was easy to tell; but I thought I discovered something more in the soft, bright blush and shy smile that stole into her face, and the look of gladness that illumined his.

"You are going to preach for us to-day?" asked my mother presently, after the introductions were over.

"Yes, he answered, smiling; "I have been appointed to this circuit fortunately for me, I do not know how it may be for you. It is pleasant to meet with friends in a new circuit," he added, rather confusedly; and saying he should see us again, he raised his hat and passed to the back of the chapel and into the little vestry, while we

ushered our little troop in at the front door, silently took our places, and awaited the service.

It was a beautiful service; the hymns, and bible lessons, and prayers, so harmonized. The sermon was fresh, and new, and original, showing earnestness of thought and refinement of language, and a heart overflowing with zeal and love. "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye may have life." It was an old text in a new setting. But alas for me, I could not take in its lessons for thought of Katie all the time, wondering whether indeed she had not learnt another lesson too well—a lesson that would ultimately woo away our little bird from its home nest.

We thought he would have returned with us for dinner, but he could not, for he had previously engaged himself to the Monteiths. Katie and Godfrey went with them. Mr. Monteith insisted on it, and Otto and mother and I went home with the children.

"Mother!" I exclaimed in rather aggrieved tones as we walked away, "how is it that you never told me?"

"About what, Beattie?"

"About Katie and Mr. Baraud."

"There was nothing to tell, my child," mother gently answered; "indeed I do not know that there is much to tell now. It is not very strange, is it, that he should be glad to see Katie again? They were a great deal thrown into each other's company during our visit to his mother; there were many subjects on which they could sympathize; but I do not think that even *you* can make anything from that," she added, smiling.

"Oh, let Beattie alone for weaving a romance out of nothing," said Otto, laughing. "She will be selecting the wedding-dress before the man has even proposed."

"There would be nothing romantic in *that*, Mr. Otto," I answered, rather piqued by his laughter,

"Besides, I could see by your face that *you* are not above suspicion."

"You should not study faces so much, Sis; they are apt to mislead," he replied, still laughing.

I had studied them to some purpose now, however. I had obtained the key to many a little mystery that had been rather puzzling the last month or two. Katie had changed—how I could not tell. She was not less sweet, not less loving. There was nothing indeed that I could define, and yet I felt in my heart of hearts that Katie had found her "fate."

Was I sorry? No, I cannot say that. Frederick Baraud was well calculated to make our Katie happy; and I knew very well—so thorough a minister's wife as she had been herself—mother was glad of the prospect for her child. No, of course I could not regret it for Katie's sake, but the future looked rather desolate and blank to me. Together, our school work had

been pleasant enough; it bore another aspect when I thought of working alone.

It was with a heavy heart I went through the Sunday lessons with the children in the afternoon. Mother was not very well, and therefore could not take them, and in Katie's absence the work devolved upon me. I was ill-fitted for it. I pitied the children as well as myself, and rejoiced quite as much as they must have done when I dismissed them with their collection of Sunday books into the garden, to read or talk, or sit among the soft breezes and the fair, bright flowers. The dark side of nature was pressing heavily upon me.

I sat alone at my bedroom window, in the depths of the easy chair, my arms resting on its ample elbow, my head in my hands, and with eyes half-filled with tears looking out into the soft greenery of the garden. Yet I was angry *with* as well as sorry for myself. I felt that I ought to be glad of any brightness that crossed

my sister's path, and that I should do well to leave the future loneliness of my own to Him who meteth out the way. Besides, was I alone while my precious mother was spared to me, and Geoffrey and Otto? Had I not also a kind friend in Bella, ever ready to help, to advise, or cheer me?

I have got over a little of my trouble to-day; now the reality has been passed. Dear Katie, she is so happy! and our young minister is certainly a fine fellow, and almost worthy of her. He brought her home last night, but with the exception of the silent language of the eyes or hand, I do not think anything had been said. Before breakfast, however, this morning, Katie was gathering roses at the other end of the garden, out of sight, or nearly so, of the house. From the one point of view, my bedroom window, I had been watching her, thinking how lovely she was, and what a picture she made with that green setting of willow boughs all round her.

Presently I saw the little gate open, and Frederick Baraud come softly towards her, but I saw no more. I did not wish to see; I escaped to the front room, and busied myself with the breakfast for the little ones, just saying as I passed mother's room,—

"Mr. Baraud is here; the children shall have breakfast alone this morning; it will be better so."

"Where is he?" asked my mother, beginning rather flurriedly to hasten with her dressing.

"Oh, do not hurry, mother dear," I answered, smiling; "Katie is with him. He came across the meadow and in at the garden-gate. I will see that our own breakfast is nicely prepared, and give the children theirs first."

The coffee, the hot cake, the delicate slices of ham, were all in perfection, when at last our breakfast-bell rang, and the little sitting-room was cozily arranged for our own family group, with just the one plate and cup in addition. They did not come in together; Frederick came

in first through the French window, and the bustle of reception was scarcely subsided, when Katie stole quietly into her place. It was something of an ordeal to her, and her blush was beautiful, and the happy light in her shy eyes not to be mistaken.

It was well I was busy behind the coffee cups, for my heart beat painfully up into my throat, and tears could with difficulty be restrained. It was very foolish of me, for I was not sorry that she was glad. Oh, no; I was only doing that most unwise thing, pitying myself, instead of rejoicing in her joy.

After all, breakfast passed off cheerily, what with Geoffrey, Otto, and mother. The little room rang with merry laughter at Otto's lively sallies, and he excelled himself this morning, partly, I think, to dispel the stiffness, which I know he detests. When the boys left for business, I ran off too, just with a passing whisper at the door to Katie, as she also rose,—

"You need not come into the schoolroom to-day, darling."

And glad of the release, she escaped like a shy fawn upstairs to her own room, leaving Frederick and my mother alone.

So it is all settled, as I knew it would be. Katie's secret is out. This love of hers was no new thing. But, as she guessed a little of my feelings, she hid her face on my shoulder, and as she folded her fair arms round me, whispered,—

"I could not help it, Beattie."

Who could help laughing at that?

"I know, I know," I answered caressingly; "do not think for one moment, darling, that I am not glad for you. It is only that I am sorry for myself. I shall get over that in good time."

So I suppose I shall, but it must be my nature to look at the dark side, and not much of the brightness has appeared, excepting for her.

I know that the prospect of spending her life with God's servants, and in His service, is a very pleasant one; and most suitable is she for the work she will have to share with him. Mother has given her unqualified consent. In every respect he answers her expectations for Katie.

As to the boys, Geoffrey especially takes to his brother-in-law elect. He sympathizes so entirely with his work, and, in his secret heart, would, I know, be so glad to share in it. They were walking together a long time in the garden this evening. No doubt the "engagement" was partly the topic of conversation, but not all. I could see them from the window as they passed up and down under the vine trellis, with arms locked, and heads bent, in earnest conversation. I knew by Geoffrey's face that they were discussing *one* subject which lay very near his heart. As they came towards the house at last, and parted at the door, Geoffrey to go to the stables, Frederick to enter the hall, I heard the latter exclaim,—

"Well, you will think over it, and let me know."

And Geoffrey hesitatingly answered,—

"Yes."

It pertained to something immediately concerning himself, something needing both thought and decision. What, I wonder? Yet I believe I can guess.

CHAPTER X.

OUR GEOFFREY.

AFTER that day of days in Katie's experience, it became a very customary thing for Frederick Baraud to spend an evening with us. He got Katie into work, prospectively, I suppose, with Alice Monteith as a companion. He made an effort to utilize me, but it was a signal failure.

"I am not fitted for Christian labour," I replied one evening, when he urged me more earnestly than usual.

"And why not?"

"Why not?" I repeated, the hot colour coming into my face. "Because only Christians *are* fitted, and I do not consider myself one."

"Still I must ask *why* not?" he continued, turning the full gaze of his dark eyes impressively on me. "Does it not seem *worth while* to be a Christian?"

"Worth while? certainly *worth while.* But, Mr. Baraud" (I cannot get into the habit of calling him Fred, as the others do), "that is not the question; everybody is not a Christian."

"No," he replied gravely, "there are many who despise the name of Christ, but *you* are not of that number?"

"Certainly not."

"And there are others who are ashamed to own their allegiance to Him. Do you class yourself with them?"

"No," I answered, less positively, to be sure, but still in the negative.

"There are others," he continued, turning and looking out into the garden, with his back towards me, "who think that there is too much to sacrifice in the Christian life, and too little

to gain. Is that your view of the matter, Beattie?"

"Not even that," I answered rather shortly, for I was feeling vexed at his catechizing, and could not very well go away without giving positive offence.

"Why then are you not a Christian?" he asked, facing round upon me so suddenly that I nearly let fall the delicate vase I was dusting.

> "'What is it keeps you back,
> From which you cannot part,
> That will not let your Saviour take
> Possession of your heart?'"

"I do not know that it is a question of willingness at all," I answered, rising and crossing the room, where a vase of faded flowers needed my attention, and a basket of freshly-gathered roses stood waiting my arrangement. "I am assured only on one point," I continued, bending over the flowers, "that I am not worthy of the name, nor," I added more firmly, "of the work."

"I never found in my Bible that Jesus came to save the worthy or the righteous. It is the sinner, and not the saint, for whom He died, Beattie. Have you no love to give Him for His love?"

"I suppose that is it. I have not found out His love; I do not realize it towards me. Mr. Baraud, excuse me, but you cannot do me any good. I believe my heart is hard."

"And only *One* can soften it. Yes, I know that —yet,

> "'Do not wrong Him by thy heavy thoughts,
> But love His love.
> Do thou full justice to His tenderness,
> His mercy prove.
> Take Him for what He is; oh, take Him all!
> And look above!'"

He turned, and went through the open French window into the garden. I saw him half-an-hour after that slowly pacing backwards and forwards, with his hands behind him, and his head down. Was he meditating the sermon he had to preach

that evening, or thinking of what I had said to him. Katie was away, on an errand to a neighbour's house; he was waiting her return, I knew. I believed him to be very earnest in his work, and I was sure that he was anxious about me.

Strange that in the midst of earnest, anxious friends, each seeking my good—each, as I am sure, praying for me, that I do not feel more anxious for myself. Am I growing harder? Am I not caring less for these things than ever, I asked? It seems so to me.

I am getting more reconciled to the thought that Kate must go, and that before very long. Mother would scarcely consent at first to the early marriage for which Frederick Baraud pleaded; but after a while she yielded. The thought of having her child so near her for the first two or three years of her married life, was a great inducement. I often have to spare her from the schoolroom now, for she is very busy, though she has many kind friends, ready and happy to help

her. It is pretty to see her bending over her work, her needles flying between her slender fingers, and robe after robe folded away exquisitely finished. One little room, which we have entirely resigned to her as a workroom, is littered all over with lace and muslin, and delicate fabrics of various kinds; for mother is positive on this point—she will have everything *good*, as well as abundant; and if our Katie must go from the home-nest, we are all agreed that she must go as becomes a daughter of the house.

How quietly the child takes it herself. It is singular, yet beautiful to observe it. It is, to be sure, no new thing, this love of the two for each other, but has been quietly growing, though only recently revealed. There is no flutter nor bustle about her. The colour deepens on her cheek when he is near her, the soft light gleams from under her long eyelashes, and all day long there is a happy smile upon her lips; but were it not for me she would go on with her customary

duties, and leave her trousseau to be completed by degrees, or at the last. We will not hear of it.

I can see now that more than half her happiness flows from the thought of sharing his work, of helping him; and as it is so, she will be very happy. Besides, he is really a fine fellow—true-hearted, manly, and affectionate. She is everything to him.

We had a surprise last night. A farmer from a village eight miles off called in, just as the sun was setting. He tied his horse at the gate, and came straight up to the window, where mother, and Katie, and I were sitting at work. He had brought some turkey's eggs for mother from his wife, and an especial charge from her to ask how we all were; but from the first I was sure that something else had brought him.

It came out presently, as he sat in the verandah, on the garden lounge, drinking a glass of mother's sparkling sugar beer.

"I think you're greatly honoured, Mistress

Melton," he said, as he set down his empty glass, which he had drained with a gust. "To be going to get a son-in-law who is so true a servant of God, and to have your own son following in his father's footsteps, is a blessing that does not fall to the lot of every mother."

We both looked up at that—Katie had stolen away before—and I saw the colour flush mother's thin cheek as she said,—

"You are alluding to my eldest son, to Geoffrey, I suppose. Yes, he is a dear, good son, a true Christian; though circumstances have not permitted him to tread in all his father's footsteps as he would, Mr. Bradford."

"It's my opinion he'll make a fine preacher, though," said the blunt farmer, rising as he spoke, and taking his hat.

"That is what he would like to be—it has been his one great wish; but it was not God's will that it should be gratified," said mother resignedly.

"God's will is not always made known at once, Mistress Melton," was the significant reply; "it does not take a college to make a preacher, neither. I allus said it was in 'im, and so I'm right. The 'live coal' brings out the 'living words.' I'm sure we all felt *that* the other night."

"What do you mean, Mr. Bradford," said my mother, rising from her seat in her excitement, and coming forward into the verandah.

"I mean that we all had a good time of it the other night. We had gathered together, a good company of us, and sat a waiting for a minister. We were not quite sure of havin' 'im, and thought of makin' a prayer-meetin' of it, as we've had to do before. So at last we begun, and were in the midst of our first hymn when your son came in, with old Andrew Pape, who just led him up to the desk and put the Bible before him. 'Hey! that's as it should be,' thought I. 'I knew it was in 'im, and now it's coming out.' Coming out!

and so, bless you, it did. We had a glorious time of it, bless the Lord! There was not a heart in the meeting that was not the better for it!"

"Did Geoffrey preach?" I faltered, for mother was past asking.

"Ah, that did he, miss: he gave us the Gospel fine. It was Christ from beginning to end. He preached from that text, 'In Him we live, and move, and have our being.' I guess some on us 'll never forget it."

"This *is* news to us," said my mother, looking up with her eyes filled with joyous tears. "We knew nothing of my boy's intentions."

"No?" said the farmer. "Why, it's not the first time either. They've had him at Painter's Flat, and Coalie Creek, and the 'old hut;' and it's all the same tale. He's just doing his Master's business, and I'm real glad of it." And the good fellow went off, beaming with happiness. We heard his strong voice singing all down the road as he went.

I threw my arms round mother, and drew her dear head to my shoulder, letting her quietly weep out her tears of joy; for they were tears of joy, I knew. And as we sat very quietly for a long time, till it was quite dark, I heard Katie sending the children off to bed; but we neither of us moved or spoke. The lamp came in at last, and then mother rose, and kissing me, went off to her own room. I knew she had thanks to give in her great gladness. It was always her way, either in trouble or joy.

So *that* was the result of Geoffrey's conference with his brother-in-law elect; *that* was the subject "he was to think over." And now I remembered that several times lately he had been home late in the evening. Of course it was clear enough now.

"So we have found you out at last, sir!" I exclaimed to Geoffrey himself an hour or two later, as we stood out in the verandah, watching the rising moon before we closed for the night.

I knew that mother had spoken to him already, and that he had learnt the betrayer of his secret. "Why did you not tell us, mother especially, that you had been preaching? It is such a joy to her."

"Give things their right names, Sis," he answered, smiling quietly. "*I* do not call it preaching. I have merely been trying to tell a few countryfolk a little of the 'good news.' It was scarcely worth mentioning."

"They do not think so; nor does mother."

"Mother knows that I would gladly give up everything to study for the ministry," he presently said. "I have had to resign that idea, and I have tried to do it without murmuring, for if God required this of me the way would have been made clear. But that is no reason why I should not try in all my leisure to do what I still most earnestly desire, to win souls to Christ in any way; and Fred Baraud has shown me that it does not take the study of anything but God's

Word to do this. So, Beattie, I have resolved, whenever and wherever I may, to speak of His love and '*persuade* men' to love Him in return. If *that* is preaching, it is what even *I* can do."

He followed me in, and locked the large door behind us.

"Beattie," he said, as he took his bedroom candle from the stand in the hall—a little stand, by-the-bye, of his own neat workmanship—and lingered a minute before he went off to his room, "Beattie, this is a work for you as well as for me; see that you do it!"

"I must have the *motive power* within first," I returned, my eyes filling with tears.

"My little Sis, surely what He has done is motive power enough!

"'I gave My life for thee;
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st happy be,
And quicken'd from the dead;
I gave My life for *thee!*
What hast thou given *Me?*'"

He bent down and kissed me, and went off to bed without another word. I stood a long time in the dusk of my room, at the window overlooking the garden, head and heart bowed down together.

Ah! if I only could be a Christian!

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER THE WEDDING.

Our sorrows often look worst in the distance; we suffer more in anticipation than in realization, at least in many things. Katie's wedding day had been the bugbear that had haunted me through many weary weeks; but it has come and gone, and mother, and I, and the boys have settled down again into our places, and the house is the same, though we *do* miss the bright little bird that helped to bring joy and happiness into its midst.

We miss her, of course, but not so much as we dreaded; for after all she is not far from us—a walk along the road, and over a few paddocks,

brings us to the house—a pretty cottage in a sheltered garden, within a stone's throw of the chapel. And pretty as it is without, it is more so within, for the ladies of the congregation took its furnishing into their own hands, and everything is perfect, even to the laundry, which delighted our good Molly's heart beyond everything.

It was a very pretty wedding—pretty in its very simplicity. The chapel was filled with spectators, many from the other preaching-stations, all eager to see the bride their minister had chosen. A sweet young bride she looked, sweet and good. They must have seen that.

We had a large wedding party, all our friends and his. Bella, and Maggie, and Alice were all bridesmaids with me, and Kenneth's two dear little girls: Isabel was especially proud of her position, and bore her honours well. Little Annie looked like a wee little rosebud as she stood in the midst of the group, her blue eyes dilated with wonder. Kenneth is growing very

proud of his children, they are so much improved. He came down from his station purposely to be present at Katie's wedding. We all came home after the ceremony to a good, old-fashioned dinner. Everything was cold, and beautifully laid out and arranged in the large dining-room; but Otto laughingly insisted that we should call things by their proper names; and, having already had an eight o'clock breakfast, we *dined* at one. There was a good deal of fun over it, which dissipated the sadness and stiffness, and prepared us for the parting that had to follow.

That of course was sad, as partings always must be. Our Katie was entering on a new life—new and untried. She was leaving the old home behind, and the old associations, and forming new ties—new friendships. After all, tears are not so unnatural—they are a just tribute to the past; but the smiles quickly follow, the joy-bells soon ring out their pæans of gladness.

We who were left behind felt it most after all,

mother especially; but even amidst her tears there were unmistakable tokens of quiet joy and satisfaction. She had given her child worthily—that was the *gist* of the whole matter; and I think she is right.

We did not keep up the wedding party after the fair bride left. Alice Monteith took them all off to her father's house. They went through the garden, and out at the little gate. I watched them through the trees till they disappeared, and then came and sat quietly down at the lonely school window, to think and to write. They had pressed me hard to go with them; but I had no inclination for festivity, even had not dear mother betrayed signs of exhaustion; and I would not have left her with only Molly in the house. So I saw her quietly resting on the sofa in the little breakfast-room, having administered her usual reviving medicine, and stole away to the old place where I have so often sat, writing bitter things against myself.

Bella and Kenneth wanted to stay behind with us, but of course we would not hear of it. It would have been mean indeed to have kept them from the bright, cheerful gathering, which at any other time I should have enjoyed—the Monteiths are such pleasant, hospitable people; and so they went.

"I will not promise to remain long," were Kenneth's parting words, rather significantly spoken, I thought, as he turned to follow the others along the willow path; and so, in the gloaming, just as Molly brought the tea-things into our little snuggery, and I entered with the lamp, bringing its brightness to bear on the gloom that had settled over it with the evening shadows—the French window softly opened, the curtain was pushed aside, and he came in.

"I have a slight headache, and came away from the noise of gay young spirits," he said smiling. "Will you let me in?"

"Certainly; but what can I give you for your headache?"

"A cup of your good tea, that is all that I need; a cup of tea, and quiet. I thought you would not turn me out."

It was very good of him to come; for I believe after all he pitied us in our solitude, and came for our benefit rather than his own. How mother's face brightened as she walked slowly in, looking pale and dispirited, and found him ready to draw up her chair, and place her in it. The tea must have had wonderful efficacy, for the headache vanished like a miracle; and instead of our little tea-table being a gloomy affair that night, it did us all a "power of good," as Matty said afterwards; Kenneth had so many things to talk of—so many bright things. He had heard more of Geoffrey's preaching expeditions, and the general appreciation with which he met, and he made mother's heart very glad with the tidings. It was a happy evening after all.

Since then we have seen Kenneth every day. It is like the revival of the old times, when he used to come in so often to see dear father whenever business or pleasure brought him to the old farm. The children on the watch for him every evening, running backwards and forwards along the old "carriage drive," as we playfully term it, and then out into the road, eager to catch the first glimpse, either of him, or of Aunt Bella, or Maggie, for they often come with him; and our evenings have really been very bright and happy ones since the dreaded wedding, though our birdie, who made so much melody in our midst, has flown. I am sure Geoffrey is very glad to see Kenneth. As to Otto, well, he is *such* a boy—so clever, so light-hearted, so nonsensical; his very laugh is infectious. I do suppose that Kenneth is a little uncongenial to him; but I sadly fear the "congenial spirits" with whom he associates are neither the best, nor the wisest, nor the truest friends to him.

And this is one of mother's silent troubles. I know it, for I often see her looking anxiously at her bright, handsome boy, and when he does not see it there are tears in her eyes. I know too, when he is absent in the evenings (and this is getting to be a frequent practice of his), her night-lamp is never put out till after his return, for he once said, in one of his candid, confidential moments,—

"I wish mother would not be so fidgetty when I am away. I came in quietly enough, never making the least noise, and if she would only go to sleep she would never hear me."

"How do you know she does not sleep?"

"Oh, because she told us once that while her light is burning we may be sure she is not asleep. Now, it spoils a fellow's fun to have the certainty of seeing that remonstrating light gleaming through the trees, at whatever time, late at night, or among the small hours of morning, one turns in."

"Is it always so?"

"Yes; never fails. Come to think of it, I should think something wrong if it did. It has become an institution. And yet that light is very rough on a fellow; it calls one's sins to remembrance with a vengeance!"

"It may be a *protecting* light to you, though, Otto! With that light you may be sure a mother's prayers are united.

"We men cannot *all* be Kenneths or Geoffreys, Bertie—I should think you know that—any more than you girls can all be Methodist pastors' wives," said Otto discontentedly. "I am half inclined to mope. I must have life; and I don't see, while I can get it where I am in a moderate degree, why I should not. I'm sorry mother takes it so to heart, though."

"You know very well what she would like best, both for you and for me," I answered in a low voice.

"Yes, of course; but a man can't make himself a Christian, even to please his mother."

"Certainly not, *only* to please her; there must be a deeper motive, I know that. But I believe this, one may either put oneself in the way of getting good, or turn one's back completely to it. Why, you know we may."

"Well, that's to do with taste, inclination. I'm sorry I can't please my mother; but it is, I suppose, because other things are more to my taste." And he turned away and walked gloomily down the garden-path.

What could I say? how could *I* utter a word of remonstrance? Was *I* making dear mother happy myself? Had she that peaceful rest and hope in me, that comfort, that she might have were I in word and deed a Christian?

We are expecting our bride and bridegroom home to-morrow. They have had a long and a pleasant tour. It will be nice to have them settled so near us, and in such a pleasant home. Kenneth, and Bella, and Alice Monteith will all be here to give them a welcome. A more public

welcome will be given next week, and I have heard whispers of a very choice tea service in waiting for the auspicious occasion. It is well to be Alice; not that I envy her position a bit. I couldn't, I *wouldn't* be a minister's wife on any account whatever; and for such a post I should be most unsuitable, and I am very sure they could not put up with me. Our little Alice will be just Frederick's right hand in everything—an earnest, loving, working Christian.

After all, I do believe that the working Christian is the happiest. The physically inert never enjoy the real good of life; and it must be so spiritually. Even machinery gets rusty, and works uneasily for want of use. Why not Christian graces? But I believe most fully what that quaint old Mr. Gordon said the other night, "It is the *love* of Christ that is wanted, like oil to make smooth our rusty machinery. No fear of our working," said the dear old man, "if our hearts are full of *His* love. We may talk all day long,

and from week's end to week's end, about our *duty* to do this and to do that; but with Christ's love deep down in our heart, our feet must run, our hands *must* work, our tongues *must* speak for Him. We cannot help it."

And I believe him.

What *I* need is this love deep down in my heart.

I knew by the look in her dear eyes that she had been thinking it all out that morning—had entered the New Year with her song of praise, and in full confidence that what had been done for her in the past would be fulfilled in the future.

There is something so beautiful in this fulness of trust. Amidst all the difficulties, and trials, and anxieties of life, it rests one to *see* it. What then must its experience be? There seems just this difference—the taking all things from a Father's hand, and the submitting to the will of a stranger. There is the quiet, the calm of confidence on the *one* side, the unrest and distrust on the other.

I can see it all, see how immeasurably the one still surpasses the other. But it is one thing to *see*, and another to realize, to attain. My practice, at present, is only to *see* and admire—and, yes, to *covet*.

Our old year went out quietly enough last

night. I, as usual, sat at my open window and watched its closing moments, full of old thoughts, and new resolves, and hopes and fears. The morning dawned with a soft sea breeze on its wings, coming up the gully between the hills, which rose on either side, just facing the house. The sun shone just as brilliantly this morning, but the refreshing breeze robbed it of its excessive heat, and the day has been lovely.

New Year, with us, had been ushered in with triple ceremonials. It had, in fact, been a gala day. I was fully reminded of it when, after leaving dear mother in the comfortable possession of her tea and broiled chicken, I came into our own breakfast-room, where the children were already seated before me, for they were all here again. In consequence of the many forced recesses we have had during the year, we have given but a very short vacation.

The children were already in their places, a happy-looking group; but for the moment I did

not quite understand the meaning of the bright smiles that accompanied the morning salutations that met me as I entered, till a glance at Isabel restored my recollection. It was her birthday, and the acquisition of another year was no light matter to the little maiden, who sat in all the conscious dignity of her eleven years, awaiting with brilliantly flushed face my birthday wishes. A tall, handsome girl she is; she has grown so much since her illness, and is greatly improved in every way. Now as she sat, with her flashing eyes and flushing cheeks, her dark curls interwoven with scarlet verbena and white jasmine, I could not help thinking that her father might with reason be proud of her, though she is not yet *all* that one could desire.

"We thought papa would have been here to breakfast to-day," said Annie rather despondently, after all my birthday kisses and New Year wishes had been dispensed, and a very nice breakfast, prepared for the occasion by

thoughtful, good-natured Molly, was under discussion.

"Did papa positively say he should be here to-day?" I asked, my cheeks becoming uncomfortably warm—I am sure I don't know why.

"Oh, yes," said Isabel eagerly. "He always *does* come to see us on our birthdays; he *never* forgets."

"Then he will surely be here," I replied; "it is rather early to expect him yet."

"Besides, the Anniversary; you forget *that*, Miss Melton. I know he would like to be here for *that*. Oh, I wish he would come now."

And that was our triple celebration. I had all the week been assisting Molly with *our* share of the contributions to the tea-meeting, and had no reason to forget it, for the week had been a very busy one to me. So it had been at the house; Katie had been married four months now, and was fully installed into all the duties of a

minister's wife, and every one seems to love her. She is the leader of a large class of young people, who cluster round her lovingly whenever she appears among them. They say that she is well following up her husband's ministrations, but I *knew* she would. Now she was in all the bustle and anxiety of preparations for their first anniversary services. My young folks started off immediately after breakfast, with boughs and flowers from the garden, to assist in the decorations; to them it was a delightful time.

And so our New Year's morning passed away, busy and gay with preparations. There was but little time for thought, and fortunately the children were too merry and busy with their companions to dwell upon their father's unusual absence. Once, indeed, little Annie came to me, on their return from the decoration expedition, and throwing her arms round my neck, and laying her cheek against mine, exclaimed softly,—

"He always, always does come. Do you think he is ill, or that anything has happened to him?"

I drew the child closely to me. There was a trembling in her voice as she said this, and my own heart gave a startled leap.

"There is plenty of time yet, Annie darling," I managed to answer; "we will not give him up yet, nor think of things that are not even likely to happen."

The child went away comforted, but I had not so easily assured myself. Was there not a possibility in her words, that "something had happened." But what? The possibility and the question followed me all day, through all the busy preparations, through all the gay festivities. Hour after hour passed, and Kenneth did not come.

We had a crowded gathering. What a pretty scene it was! The white chapel amidst the trees, and a semi-circle of carts, and traps, and waggonettes of every description drawn into the

shadow of depending branches on every side. Happy groups of people clustering here and there, and gay bands of light-hearted youth, and unthinking, joyous childhood, thoroughly enjoying their modicum of happiness. Yes, there was a full gathering; both vestry doors were thrown widely open, and tables spread there as well as in the body of the chapel, while over each door was an archway of greenery, and the word "Welcome," in white flowers. The whole place was fragrant and bowery. Mottoes on every side embellished the walls. Many of them were mine; the girls helped me, gathering the flowers while I wove them into designs. My mother had chosen one; it held a conspicuous place, where every one could see it. I wrought it in scarlet verbena on a green leafy ground. The words harmonized, I knew, with her own feelings.

"Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

At the tea, mother had the seat of honour, next

to Katie, who presided, of course, at the minister's table. A proud and a happy mother I knew she was that day. It was pleasant to see her sweet, delicate face, with its flush of excitement, and to witness the courtly attention she met with, both from her son-in-law and his brother ministers. I could not watch them much, however, for I had a large tray of my own to preside over, and Otto was kept perpetually busy with the teapot. His merriment and fun brought a large number of young people to drink tea at our table. The tea-meeting was a great success.

The question was, whether the chapel would. We were all kept very busy, clearing away the débris of the tea, and rearranging the seats, and then the people came pouring in till every seat was filled, and every available atom of room occupied. The platform was entirely filled by a group of speakers, one or two "great guns" from Adelaide being prominent. They had tried to get Geoffrey among them, but his modesty would not permit it.

"Never mind! we shall have him upon his legs yet," said Frederick in a significant aside to me, and he went off smiling.

What had become of Kenneth? He had promised to speak at the meeting, so Frederick announced, but something had evidently detained him, though even at that late hour it was possible for him to arrive. What had become of him? My own heart echoed the question. Would he have allowed anything of a trivial nature to interfere with a promise, either to his children, or the church? Something serious must have happened to detain him. I was restless and uneasy, and in spite of the lively, cheerful character of the meeting, found it difficult to attend. Isabel and Annie shared in my feelings. I noticed them every now and then turning back anxious glances to the door.

"It was not like papa to forget me," Isabel whispered once, the tears coming into her eyes.

"He has not forgotten you, you may be quite sure of that, dear," I answered; "there may be

so may things occurring we know nothing of, to detain him."

"If I was only sure it was nothing *bad*," she answered tearfully.

"Oh, Isabel, I don't believe it is," said little Annie, flushing prettily. "Papa is one of God's children, and He will take care of him. Besides, you know only *good* can happen to them."

"Bad things *do* happen to God's children," said Isabel doubtfully.

"Any way, He makes them turn out for good; papa said so himself," was Annie's reply. "The hymn says,—

'All that we meet must work for our good;'

and I'm going to believe it, too."

How I envied the child her simple faith! Her little face grew contented and bright after that, till at last, wearied with the length of the meeting, the blue eyes closed, and her fair head nestled against my arm. She was in a sweet, trustful sleep.

"So He giveth His beloved sleep," I thought, as I looked down on the fair little face. "With the *trust* comes the *rest.*" That is easy to understand; even in temporal matters, it is clear and plain. All the world over, it is doubt, and distrust, and timidity that brings the sorrow, and the pain, and the *unrest.* It is beautiful to *trust* —to be able to lay down at once both head and heart, upon One whom we feel *will* not, *cannot* fail us, Whose will is as strong as His ability, whose ability is only equalled by His willingness. This was what I needed to make life a happy one. But the distrust, the lack of faith, the "slowness to believe," was mine, and with that the *unrest.*

The meeting was half over when a little disturbance at the front door attracted my attention. A stranger had found his way in through the crowd, and was whispering to one of the leading men. My heart grew still and cold, for the next moment he went forward to Mr. Gordon's pew, and Bella and Maggie, rising instantly, went out.

I looked at Otto, who was seated with us, and he arose at once and followed them, but it was many minutes before he returned, and during those minutes I sat deathly cold, and shivering with undefined fear, struggling to subdue the unwonted feeling, and reassure myself into quietude. Otto came in at last, and sat down quietly by my side.

"What is it?" I hoarsely whispered.

"Don't be frightened, Beattie," he answered. "I dare say it's not much. Kenneth has met with an accident—not serious, I expect, people always exaggerate. I thought, however, you had better get these children home before they hear anything of the matter, so I have brought Monteith's waggonette round by the back road. Come out as quietly as you can. Mother will stop with Katie to-night, will she not?"

"Yes." It was all I could reply, as I turned to the children—there were five of them—and motioned them to get their wraps and follow me out.

"Are not we going to stay to the end?" asked one of the elder girls.

"No," said Otto, as, seeing my inability to do so, he took up the sleeping Annie in his arms, and wrapped her round, rather clumsily, in the shawl he had picked up. "I have a chance of driving you home now; later I might not be able, for the waggonette would be needed;" so the question was settled at once.

How kind Otto was! how he took the whole burden of the children's talk off my hands during that ride home, and then, as we all stood in the dining-room throwing off our wraps, called Maggie in, and sent them under her convoy to bed.

"Beattie is tired," he answered in reply to her earnest looks of surprise. "The best thing that she could do would be to go to bed herself; but as I know she won't do that, she had better lie down on the sofa, and try to rest there till my return. I am going to take the waggonette back, and then ride on to the Gordons," he whispered

as the children went off to bed with Maggie. "I shall soon find out the rights of the matter; so don't be an ass, Beattie, and frighten yourself for nothing." And with another doubtful look at my white face, he went.

I could not lie on the sofa; I could not *pretend* even to rest—rest was far from me. I got up as soon as Otto left the house and I heard the echo of the wheels along the hard, dry road, and paced up and down the room in my disquietude. "It was the *uncertainty* did the mischief," I reasoned. If I only *knew* the worst, it could not be so bad; and it did not make it any better to feel that I had no *special right* to concern myself so greatly, even for an old friend. I might be making myself an "*ass*" as Otto said; no doubt I was; but I could not help it—I could not! oh, I could not! And with that hushed but bitter cry, down in my heart, I went out into the shadow of the verandah, and paced up and down there.

The old doubt came seething up as I walked—

doubt of the *love* that Christians say makes every thing work together for *good.* I was as far off as ever from comprehending it. If it was something serious that had happened to Kenneth, of what nature could that love be that could snatch him away from his children, from those who loved him so much that they would be desolate without him? How about himself? Well, he was safe. Yes, it might be gain to him. I came back then, sick of the moonlight, and the shadows, and the watching, and laid both head and heart on the sofa in all the agony of suspense.

It seemed hours before the sound of horses' feet came on the hard road again, and yet when I raised my head and looked at the clock again, I saw that scarcely three quarters of an hour had passed. I rose slowly and stood in the doorway as he approached, without the power to syllable a question.

"Not so bad after all," he answered cheerily in reply to my mute expression; "he'll get over it."

"What?" I hoarsely asked.

"He has been thrown from his horse; no bones broken though. He fell on his head, and of course that knocked the senses out of him for a time; but our old doctor says he'll win through."

I don't know what ailed me. I turned sick, and cold, and faint; the earth seem sinking away; and how dark it grew!

Where was I? Stretched on the floor, my hair and face wet, and a smell of burnt feathers and vinegar about.

"She's coming round now"—that's what I heard, in Molly's voice. She was kneeling on the floor, fanning me. "No, Master Otter, let her lie a little; give her a drop more *sal wolatile*, and presently we'll take her up to bed, poor dear. She's been a doing too much, that's it; but I'm glad missus ain't at home."

Yes, and so was I, for I *had* made an ass of myself, and I wished Otto would go away and

leave me. He said nothing, however; only when he helped me to the door of my room he whispered, with a kiss, and a pinch of my cheek,—

"Get a good night's sleep, Beattie. There's little enough the matter, so don't be an ass."

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSPENSE.

We had a very irregular sort of week in the schoolroom. Fortunately many of the day pupils were absent, from various causes connected with the previous day's services, and so we had a very small number present; for which I was not sorry, for the reaction of yesterday's excitement has shaken me.

We were obliged to tell the children the reason of their father's absence. We made, of course, as little of it as we could; but it was useless. Isabel sobbed passionately the whole morning; nothing would pacify her, till she fell asleep on the bed upstairs, fairly exhausted. Little Annie

took it more quietly; but it was pitiable to see her when she thought she was unobserved, with her blue eyes filled with tears, which slowly trickled down her cheeks. They wanted at once to be taken to their father; but that was utterly useless, for he still lies in a state of unconsciousness, though the doctor gives every hope of restoration.

Will the doctor's verdict be right? Can there possibly be such a hope?

Kenneth Gordon is too well-known, too much honoured and esteemed, for this accident not to draw out the sympathy of his friends. There are anxious inquiries on all sides, either here or at the Glen. We are expected to know everything, and I am so thankful that either mother or Molly undertakes the answers.

We have heard all about the accident. It occurred in a very simple way. Kenneth was riding a favourite horse of his, but he had been detained, we suppose, on his journey, so that the

shadows were falling thickly among the trees when he got within two miles of the chapel, at that particular point where the road turns off, or breaks off into two branches, one leading to his father's house, the other to the chapel and manse. There has been an excavation lately for stone, I believe. This Kenneth cannot have known, for it appears that he rode carelessly and rapidly forward, and in one moment the front legs of his horse were down the hole, and he was pitched violently forward over his head. Two gentlemen were riding behind him in a gig, and seeing the accident, lifted him up and carried him to the nearest hotel, where he still lies. His mother and Bella are with him.

Dear little Annie and her simple faith! It is refreshing to hear her few sweet words. Whether she read the despondency in my face I cannot say, but she came softly in just now, and threw her arms round my neck, placing her fair cheek against mine as she timidly whispered,—

'I do not think God will take my papa away from us. I think He will make him well again."

"Why, my darling?" I asked.

"I have been asking Him, Miss Beattie, and I *know* he will soon be better."

Ah, we shall see if the faith of the infant conquers. It was Jesus Himself who placed the little child in the midst, to teach us in its truthfulness the beauty and simplicity of faith. But oh, how slow we are to learn! how difficult we find it to understand His ways. And in spite of His word, that lay open before me this morning, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter," my restless will wants the satisfaction *now;* it cannot wait.

I am very tired and weary. Life seems one perpetual struggle with us, notwithstanding, as mother says, "it has its many mercies." But mother unites the faith of the mature Christian with the simplicity of the little child. She stands so firmly on the Rock of Ages, that the waves and

billows rage their warfare harmlessly at her feet. It is a lovely evening; the dancing, flickering shadows come dreamily aslant the poplar boughs, and through the yellow banksia, throwing its leafy tracery over my paper. There is one large gum-tree beyond the garden, in the clover paddock. All its branches stand clearly defined against the sky. It is a fine, old tree, leafy and umbrageous, as some of our old gums are in the best seasons. A magpie has its nest there, and morning and evening it pours out such strains of wild, joyous melody, that it sinks into my very soul. Is it the bird's thanksgiving for the light of another day? for the kindly rest of night? So it seems to me, and I often stand rebuked by a bird.

How many lessons has Nature to teach, if we have eyes to discover and a will to learn. Should not that soft, rich, thrilling melody, just now bursting from the quivering little throat, teach me a theme of thanksgiving—of confidence —of contentment?

God's ways are not as *our* ways! neither are our ways like His. I am beginning to long to know more of Him—to find Him out as a God of love. How can we love those from whom we stand aloof? Is it not one of Paul's sayings, "I know in whom I have believed?" That is it; with that knowledge the confidence gathers. He *knows,* and therefore neither fears nor doubts. What shall *I* do to obtain all this? . . .

I left off writing just as the sun fell below the horizon, and dark shadows were gathering in every corner of the room. It was time for our usual evening meal, and I had to gather the children together for that—then for the hour's study of lessons for the next day—and then the evening prayer, and bed.

Isabel and Annie both share my room now—the fair hair and the dark, both on one pillow. I often glance across at them while they are sleeping in the unconscious beauty of childhood. To-night I put out the light, and sat

quietly down by the window, looking out on the moon-lighted garden. Annie's golden head was soon quietly nestled on the pillow, and her blue eyes closed in sleep, but I knew by Isabel's restless movements that she was still waking.

"Can you not sleep, dear?" I presently asked.

"Oh, Miss Beattie!" she exclaimed with a trembling voice, half-rising as she spoke; "I want so much to hear how dear papa is."

"I know you do, darling!" I commanded my voice sufficiently to answer. "We shall know to-night; Geoffrey will bring us word."

"Will you come and tell me as soon as you know?"

"I will. Now will you not try to rest? It may be good news to-night too, for the doctor spoke hopefully this morning."

But she turned away, and hid her face on her pillow, answering sadly, "When I *know;*" and then, as I prepared to leave the room, calling out pleadingly,—

"Please leave the door open."

I sat in the gloaming of our little sitting-room, neither working nor reading, for I had turned down the lamp and drawn up the window-blind, preferring to watch the moon-lighted beauty of the garden, and little disposed for book or work. It was not the wisest thing to do, for work is healthy and wholesome, be it of what nature it may; but my mother had gone early to bed, feeling tired and weary; Maggie was in the kitchen, making her usual batch of bread; and I sat alone, with the ticking of the clock, the purring of the cat, and my own thoughts. The last were poor company enough, for they were very sad ones.

They went back to those few happy days after Katie's wedding, when, evening after evening, Kenneth gave us his pleasant company, and home seemed none less dear even though our darling had left it. We had been looking for another series of his pleasant visits; and, now!—would he ever come again?

I had found out *one* thing, but I would not have breathed it in another's ear for worlds. Kenneth cared for me; he liked to be in my company. Of course, I knew that; but I also knew that there was one barrier between us that God alone could raise. He had suffered so severely in times past by forgetting the Christian injunction, and forging bonds which the Christian law could not sanction, that no wonder he feared to do the same thing again.

Why then did he come near us? Why not keep entirely away? Was there not a little hope expressed in these very visits—that even Beattie was not far from the kingdom? The tears came welling into my eyes at the thought —"Not far from the kingdom!" My heart throbbed with the response—"Let Thy kingdom come to me, to *me*, oh Lord!"

But now there was a blank, and how would it end? how should I bear it? He was safe—his everlasting happiness secured. There was not

a doubt of that; but what of those left behind? what of his little daughters? what of *me?* for I knew that while he lived I had his prayers—when he was near me, his friendship and advice. If he died what should I do—I, who must *silently* bear the sorrow?

I opened the window, and went out—walking restlessly up and down, as I had done the evening before. Geoffrey was late; what was keeping him? He had promised to come on immediately from the hotel, bringing the tidings, good and bad. The suspense was hard to bear. Some sort of change was expected—what would it be?

But there was no sound along the road, although I listened intently for it. The night wind quivered among the boughs, and shook the leaves, and rustled the grass; and now and then a magpie, disturbed from its sleep in the trees, and allured by the pure, clear moonlight, uttered a little gush of song—sounding very sweet

amidst the silence. Afar, too, from the creek, came the croaking of frogs like a sad monotone. To-night, indeed, the magpie's notes, the rustle of the leaves, the croaking of the frogs, were all in the minor key; they harmonized with my own feelings.

If I could only pray! And I went out along the garden-path, and stood leaning over the white gate, looking out on the road. Pray! I know now, what I did not know *then*, that I was praying all the time—for how much of prayer is there that is *no* prayer, and how often may we really pray, when we deem ourselves unfit to utter a word. In fact, it is not prayer that we engage in as duty; a strong sense of need must be felt to bring out its language, whether in speech or the mute desire.

I was still standing there in my quiet anguish, when Geoffrey came up. I was so entirely absorbed by my sad thoughts, that I never heard his footsteps—for he was walking to-night—and

was unconscious of his presence till he spake. Then I started violently, and trembled all over.

"Were you asleep, Beattie?" he asked cheerfully—so cheerfully that I knew he could not be the bearer of bad news.

"Not asleep—but *dreaming*, I suppose," I replied, rather confusedly. "How late you are! Oh, Geoffrey! have you been?"

"Yes. I waited that my news might be really good, without chance of mistake. Kenneth will recover; he is conscious, and no fear of a relapse."

I don't know *what* I did. I seemed stunned with the sudden reaction of joy. I believe I said nothing, but only leaned more heavily on the gate, till Geoffrey, throwing his arm round me, took me indoors.

"You need not be afraid, Beattie," he said as he closed the door; "Kenneth will soon be well again. The Lord has more work for him to do. Now go and sleep, and thank your Father for

His loving-kindness; and learn to *trust* Him, dear sister, for He is worthy of it."

I, too, was beginning to learn a little of that lesson.

I crept up to my room in the dark, for I did not care to light the lamp—the moonlight was sufficient for me. Isabel was watching for me, and sat up in bed with extended arms.

I threw mine round her, and drew down her head to my shoulders.

"Papa is better; he is quite conscious, and will soon be well," I whispered, fondly kissing her. "We must thank God for this, Bella."

With a great sob of gladness, she lay down again on her pillow, burying her face in it. Not a word more passed between us. I sat far into the night in the window, and a few moments after she was sleeping calmly.

CHAPTER XIV.

"THE CALM AFTER THE STORM."

"AFTER the storm there was a calm" is an experience that is repeated over and over again in even the least eventful life. It is not, however, always a peaceful calm. The winds may have ceased their roaring—the billows their tremendous roll, and there may be a lull, that bears on its bosom only the gathering of another storm.

I sat alone at my bedroom window an evening or two after the occurrences last recorded, wondering to myself whether the calm was real, or whether we were merely experiencing a lull in our storm of trouble, which would yet break forth with greater intensity.

Was I ungrateful for the strong mark of God's infinite goodness in giving back to us the life that had been in such imminent danger? Ah no, I was only afraid—afraid to trust in the hand that had helped in this extremity—afraid to trust in my *own* affairs.

Kenneth Gordon was in a fair way for recovery—so far recovered, indeed, that he had been removed from the hotel to his father's house, and was undergoing a course of gentle nursing and caring-for from his fond old mother and two loving sisters. It was there I was at last able to take Isabel and little Annie, to see their papa.

Geoffrey drove us over in the evening, after his return from business. I think he contrived to come home a little earlier on purpose to do so. He knew that one of the first things that Kenneth thought of was his children—that was perfectly natural.

It was a lovely evening when we set out—clear and balmy, and promising a moon-lighted

path homeward. The air fell softly on our faces, and the children were so quietly happy that it almost brought the tears to my eyes. What would it have been for them had the accident proved fatal? It was too terrible to think of.

Geoffrey had all sorts of cautions to give to the little ones, though I shrewdly enough imagined some of them were intended for me. Kenneth, he said, had not quite recovered; he still suffered from the effects of the fall; we must expect to see him looking white and ill; and yet we must not let him see that we thought him so. In other words, we were to be quiet, not to excite him in any way, as he was not able to bear it.

As we approached the house even the children were awed into silence, and Isabel was very pale. She was old enough to comprehend the position; and had feared so much, while she lacked Annie's simple faith, which had believed that God would make her papa well again.

"And you see He *has*," she had whispered

expressively in my ear, as I tied her hat before we went.

I scarcely know how I felt as we were lifted from the old buggy, and stood for a moment under the porch, waiting for an entrance. I wanted to go in, and yet I shrank from the interview. The past few days had revealed more to me of myself and my feelings than I cared to think of; I put them from me—far from me—and endeavoured only to think of the children, and their joy in their father's recovery. Nevertheless, when Bella came out, and taking both my hands in hers drew me in doors, I knew that she must have felt how cold they were.

And yet, after all, I need not have been afraid. I had pictured to myself something terrible in his appearance. There was nothing of the kind. It was just his old self—the same kind warm smile, the same beaming eye; only that he was very pale, and, leaning back in the large chair, looked as if he had passed through a severe illness.

The children crept to his side—Isabel twining her arms round his neck, Annie laying her curly head upon his arm.

"My darlings!" I heard him say, as he bent down and kissed them, at the same time stretching out his hand to me.

"It is very good of you to come to see me, Miss Beattie!" he said in a low voice.

"We have all been so anxious, and are so glad you are better," I ventured softly.

"Yes; I believe I have been very near death; and yet I am spared. I am another monument of His mercy; I ought to love Him more for this."

"Do you suffer pain *still?*"

"A little, in my head—more weakness than pain; but it is going off; the doctor assures me I shall soon be as well as ever again."

"Yes; with care," interposed his mother. "But you must remember, Kenneth, that you are not to talk much. Beattie and the children

have come to *see* you, and for you to *see* them. Talking much is forbidden."

"We will have our talk at another time," he said, with a smile at his mother's blunt injunction; while I, feeling the hot colour arising in my cheeks, withdrew at once with Bella, leaving the little ones still quietly nestling by his side, signifying their presence only by mute caresses.

"It is such a miracle that he is recovering," she said, as together we sat down on the side of her bed, hand in hand. "We did not even dare to hope at first. Those long, long hours of unconsciousness were so terrible. How good our Father has been in sparing him to us all."

"Yes," I answered in a low voice. "It would have been dreadful for the dear children, and for you all. We who are only old friends, would have felt it badly enough."

It might have been but fancy, but I thought she turned a very penetrating glance upon me;

my eyes fell beneath hers. Why did she look at me so? She turned away presently, dropping my hand rather abruptly, and diligently folded and refolded a small handkerchief that was lying on the bed.

"Yes," she said expressively, "Kenneth has many friends, who would have missed him. It came so suddenly upon us all; it was not like an illness. But, as I said, God has been good in giving him back to us."

"Geoffrey says, God has more work for him to do," I presently softly ventured.

"I think so, too," she replied, brightening up. "The harvest is great, and the labourers few, and Kenneth's work is peculiarly fitted to him, although it is only *lay* work. We shall keep him with us as long as we can, however, that he may acquire strength. It was his intention to remain here for a few weeks, you know —he had left everything straight at the station. It is a good thing that he did so; for now he

can stay away without a care. So you see, dear Beattie, all is ordered well."

"Even the accident itself?" I could not help asking.

"Even *that*—though at present we can only see why it should *not* have been, not why it *should*. We shall find *that* out by-and-by. Do you not believe that, Beattie?"

"I think I am *learning* it, Bella—slowly enough, for I am slow to learn these things," I said in a low voice, and hesitatingly. "These feelings and beliefs are such tender things; like the dust on the butterfly's wing, or the bloom on a peach, they cannot bear a touch. I scarcely dare speak of them."

For all that she turned round with a glad look in her eyes, and throwing her arms round me, kissed me again and again.

"Learn on, Beattie, however slowly. It is written, 'Then shall they *know*, if they follow on to know the Lord.' *He* is the best teacher—you *must* learn well of Him."

When we went into the room again, Geoffrey had brought round the horse, and was ready to drive us back. The children were seated in their places. They had been very good, and taken farewell of their papa very contentedly, having the promise of soon seeing him again.

"I have not had much of *your* company, Beattie," Kenneth said in a low voice, when I went to bid him good-bye; "for *that* I suppose I must wait."

What did he mean? Was I not to come any more? I puzzled over those words half way home, and then gave up the solution, till Kenneth himself should explain it.

I had not to stay so long, however. It was a splendid ride home, and the children were as lively as they had been quiet before. Isabel was loud in her declarations that "papa would soon be well again. And only think, Miss Beattie," she at last exclaimed, "he says he shall very soon be coming to see us, instead of our coming to see him."

That was it; there was the solution to his words. The old times would be renewed. And from the wistful way in which he said, "for that I suppose I must wait," showed that those times, and the anticipation of their renewal, were as pleasant to him as to us. Mother and I had so enjoyed those evenings after Katie's wedding, it almost seemed too good to be true, that they would return.

Mother was not very well that night, and Geoffrey after our return shut himself up in the schoolroom with his books. He has promised to take the services for Frederick next Sunday at one of his preaching stations, leaving Fred the whole Sunday for home. It is easy to see how thoroughly Geoffrey enters into and enjoys the work. He is liked wherever he goes, and is doing much good.

"I never thought of daring to speak in public till Frederick Baraud came," he said, before he left the room with his books. "Indeed, as I

could not regularly enter the college, and study regularly all that is necessary, I should have thought it presumption to have done so. I have learnt better now; I have God for a teacher, and His word to study; and who teacheth like Him?"

"You like your work, Geoffrey?"

"My Sissie, work! Yes, Beattie; it is a good and a happy thing to labour for His kingdom."

I can understand that. I feel that even *I* should like to be winning souls for Jesus. I have learnt something during the last few days—learnt my own weakness, and something of Christ's strength —my own ignorance, and His perfect wisdom. Yes; I am daily learning what I have been so slow to learn, that His ways are *right*, however painful they may seem, however different to *mine;* and to acknowledge that it has been good for me, that I have not escaped trouble.

How happy I have made dear mother to-night. I could not help speaking, my heart was so full.

I went into her room just before closing up

the house and retiring to bed myself—just to see if she had everything she wished—if her little night-light was burning properly, and that all was right.

"Cannot you sleep, mother dear?" I asked, noticing her wide-open eyes.

"No, Beattie, but I am not dull. He giveth songs in the night. I think *you* will know something of this some day, dear," she wistfully added.

"Mother dear, I think lately I *have* known a little of it."

She half rose on her pillow, and held out her hands to me.

"Child! have you found out at last how good your Father really is?" she asked, in quick, eager tones, her thin cheek flushing, and her soft eye fixed on my face.

"I am finding it all out, darling mother," I replied, folding my arms round her, and hiding away my tearful eyes on her shoulder. "I am

beginning to understand how even our sorrows may be blessings in disguise."

" Ah," said my mother joyously, " I can realize those words now—

> ' *Wait* to understand !
> Doubt not this discipline of pain is good.
> They who are glad to feel a chastening hand
> Have partly understood.'

Afflictions are not joyous, but grievous; but afterwards—yes, AFTERWARDS, they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness. That is it, Beattie; and you are learning this, my child? My heart is very glad for you. I thank my Lord for another proof of His exceeding love !"

I lay long through the night, wide awake, looking out upon the moonlight, my heart very peacefully happy—full of the peace that passeth understanding. What a wonderful thing is this peace—peace in believing! Ah, that is the secret; it is a quiet rest—a certainty attained—a rest granted—faith's blessed fruit. I knew

now in whom I believed—not in an angry judge, but in a tender Father, God in Christ, all love—"easily touched with the feeling of our infirmities," knowing our temptations, and able to provide an escape from them all. I think I had never in my life felt so happy. I was too happy—too full of my new joy, for sleep.

I did sleep at last. The sun was shining brightly into my room when I awoke. I sprang lightly from my bed to dress, and as I did so, the same glad feeling, of a new possession that none could take from me, came back, and my whole soul sent forth a glad thanksgiving.

CHAPTER XV.

OUR GEOFF.'S ENGAGEMENT.

THE last few days have been very happy ones. I have found out how sweet a thing it is to give oneself up to Jesus. Life has new aspects now. To have all ordered by His loving hand, to feel under His care all day long, is such joy. Everything has gone more smoothly, everything has seemed more beautiful. To do *everything as for the Lord* appears to impart a fresh value to even the simplest work.

Dear mother! how she rejoices with me—how much closer we seem to have drawn together.

"There is one more dear one to pray for—poor Otto!" she said this evening. He is very much

on her mind; and yet we have not heard any positive wrong of him, any especial wildness. Only that he thinks so slightingly of religion, and all connected with it. And the companions he has chosen are of the kind that are likely to lead him astray, and influence him wrongly. This is dear mother's greatest cross. I know she prays much for him. But oh, if God has overruled unbelief in my heart, He is well able to put His love in the heart of my younger brother, and to turn him heavenwards; and just now I feel He is *so* able, *so* willing.

We did not go again to see Kenneth. The children sadly wanted to do so, but their grandmamma overruled it, and insisted that for a few days he should be left quite quiet; and though the doctor evidently did not consider it necessary, he admitted in deference to her wishes that it would be quite as well. So the children had to wait, and so had *we*. But we had the consolation of hearing daily that he was fast getting well

and strong, and that it was no easy work to keep him in doors.

Yesterday was the week-night service; mother did not go, so I went with Isabel and Ellen Guise, my eldest pupils.

It was such a lovely evening, so balmy and soft. The day had been warm, but as the sun fell lower and lower in the west, a sweet, cool breeze set in, making walking very pleasant. The girls chatted merrily with one another, sometimes running on before to gather flowers, or look after an opossum as it darted along the boughs of some great gum-tree standing in our pathway. I walked silently on, thinking my own glad thoughts, and rejoicing in my new-found happiness.

We were rather early, for I wanted to run in to Katie for a moment before service. She had been absent, at one of her husband's preaching-stations on a visit, and I had not seen her for a fortnight. I was not sure whether Frederick

would preach that night, not quite certain whether she herself would be back.

She was, though. She caught sight of me from the window, and met me at the door with extended arms.

"Oh, Beattie," she exclaimed, "I'm so glad! I'm so glad!"

I took her in my arms and led her in. I knew quite well what she meant; the joyful news had reached her—I don't know how.

"You are rejoicing with me in my new-found blessing, darling?" I returned, with many kisses. "Oh, darling, I could not hold out any longer."

"No, dear Beattie, when Jesus enters the heart we must betray it in some way; we must yield to Him. I have waited so long for this, my sister."

We went into the pretty parlour, while the children walked round the garden with a young friend. I had time to tell her something of my

joy before the door of Frederick's study opened, and he himself came brightly in.

"Well, Beattie," he exclaimed, with an outstretched hand and a glad smile, "have you anything good to tell me?"

"Nothing but what I think you have heard already," I gravely answered, "that I have found out for myself, God as a God of love, even in Jesus Christ, and that I gladly yield myself to Him."

"Ah! that is what a sense of His love always results in. It melts, we yield. How can it be otherwise? And what follows, Beattie?" he added.

"What do you mean?" I asked, rather wonderingly.

"Are you going to hide your little candle under a bushel?" he asked, fixing those impressive eyes of his upon me.

"No," I replied softly, "I wish to unite with His people, if that is what you mean?"

"Yes, my dear girl, that is just what I mean," he replied warmly. "It is the best, the wisest, the most natural step; first giving yourself to the Lord, and then to His people. We need not be ashamed to acknowledge such a Master, Beattie."

"No, I am not ashamed. It is an honour to be allowed to do so."

He shook hands heartily with me.

"It shall be seen to at once, Beattie," he said. And he hurried out to the chapel, for the last strokes of the little bell were ringing, and the people were rapidly flocking in. We have such full week-night meetings since Frederick has been here; there has been a great revival. The place was half full when Katie and I took our seats.

When the mind is at rest how lovely everything appears, what a new aspect things wear. What a glory seemed to fill the dear little chapel that night. The hymns, the prayers, Frederick's

address, all seemed invested with a new power. I craved a blessing, and it came to me.

The news had spread that "Miss Melton was coming among them at last," and I had many a hearty shake of the hand in consequence. One old man, a silver-haired old Christian of seventy years, always rejoicing, always happy, just indeed ripe for glory, so it seemed to me, came up just as I was leaving the chapel, and exclaimed in those warm, hearty tones that do one good, they sound so real,—

"God bless you, my dear young lady! God bless you, and make you a blessing! It is a good thing to serve the Lord when the heart is young and warm. I have found it good all the way through, praise the Lord. There is none like Jesus."

Dear old man! He is a practical lesson in faith and love too. He is happy himself, and seeks to make others equally so.

Geoffrey has been away from home lately for a holiday, but he has been preaching at various

places, and with so much acceptance, and with such an abundant harvest, that I think he will give himself up wholly to the ministry. It is almost decided that he resigns his situation next month, and enters upon trial. He will then have more time for study, and will preach constantly.

He told me another secret since his return. He and Alice Monteith are engaged. They have long been attached to each other, but without words. Now he has spoken to her father, and has obtained his consent. Not, he said, that he did not think as regards worldly wealth she might have done better, but so far as appreciation of Geoffrey's character and a personal liking for him went, he was quite ready to believe that his little Alice had not made a bad choice.

He quite agrees with Geoffrey's determination to go into the ministry. But there will be quite two years to wait for the marriage. Well, they are both young, and perhaps it is better so. Little Alice will make a charming minister's

wife. She is quite a lady bountiful now, and dispenses her gifts so lovingly. She is very useful in the church and the Sabbath-school. In every sense of the word it is well for dear Geoff, and mother is very pleased. But I must say that I did not think her father's consent would be so easily obtained. I imagined he would look higher for his daughter—higher so far as worldly possessions, of course, I mean; for Geoff is a true gentleman, well educated, and clever, and she could not possibly have any one who would love her better.

I had known a long time that Geoffrey loved Alice Monteith, but particularly was I sure of it that time after my illness, when she came and stopped with me in mother's absence; but I did not think it would terminate so happily. I am very glad.

Geoff came in with her this evening after tea, just in the gloaming. It was pretty to see her girlish confusion when dear mother, in her loving

way, drew her into her loving arms, and kissed and blessed her.

"You have made my boy very happy," I heard her whisper, and the rose on Alice's cheek could not be equalled.

So now we shall often see dear Alice, it is such a short distance between our houses, going through our back garden, and entering by their back gate; there is little more than the length of a paddock between.

Mother said to-night, as she lay down to rest, and I stood arranging her little night-lamp at the toilet-table, that "her cup of joy was almost full."

How glad am I to have been able to contribute my mite to the sum of her happiness! It needs for dear Otto to complete it, and "there is nothing too hard for the Lord."

Poor Otto! he has not looked well lately. There are dark shadows round his eyes, and his face looks very thin. He laughs when I tell him

I know that he is not well; but it is a fact nevertheless. Do not I know that he goes away morning after morning with a scarcely-tasted breakfast; that he returns at night with no appetite for his tea; and the late hours he keeps are not conducive to his health?

"If you would only come home early every night, it would help to restore your strength, Otto dear," I said to him only yesterday, as he stood a moment, after breakfast, slowly and languidly drawing on his coat at the door. I had a button-hole bouquet in my hand of blue and white violets. He smiled as I fastened them in.

"We want you a great deal more than your friends," I added gently.

"I don't think you do, Beattie," he replied rather bitterly; "you are all so precious good here. I should not think you wanted such a reprobate amongst you."

"Oh, Otto, you know we all love to have you at home."

"I can't see why you should. I should think I must be in the way. I am not good, and I can't *pretend* to be."

"We none of us *pretend* to be good, Otto dear! We love Christ, and seek to follow Him."

"Yes; you are all together now; and I—am *alone*." He said this bitterly, and turned away; "birds of a feather flock together," he added; "so I am best with my kind."

"Ah, no—no; no, you are not; you are best with us, who love you; and you know how dear you are to mother."

"Dear old mother! Yes; I do not doubt her love; nor yours, Beattie," he added, seeing my look of reproach and flushing face. "You are a good sister, only you must let me go my way, and I will let you go yours. But don't fancy I am ill, when I'm as right as ninepence."

Nevertheless, it is easy enough to see that he is not right. He will have to get a change of

some kind, or he will be ill. I think mother notices it, too. I saw her looking very anxiously at him last night, as he sat smoking in the verandah. If anything was to happen, what would she do?

CHAPTER XVI.

TERRIBLE TROUBLE.

We have been in terrible trouble—such trouble that I can scarcely bear to think of it. Mere bodily illness would not have given us half so much anxiety and suffering.

We had seen for some time past that Otto was far from well, as I said before; but it began to be evident that something was seriously the matter with him. Mother begged him to see the doctor, but at first he only laughed, and then got angry, declaring that we made him sick with our fancies, and that there was nothing at all the matter with him.

If it was not bodily illness, there was something

on his mind, I was sure, for there were unmistakable signs of some kind of suffering on that expressive face of his. Besides, he was so altered. We no longer heard his voice along the road, singing or whistling. His joyous laugh no longer gave token of his presence, bringing the sunshine among us, as it did of yore. I kept my own thoughts, and said nothing to mother; indeed I tried to cheer her up with the belief that his rapid growth, the weather, or a little extra pressure of business, might account for the alteration, while my own heart was very heavy with fear.

Had Kenneth been about, we might have had the benefit of his opinion; but he was absent at the seaside, for two or three weeks, with his mother and the children. The sea breezes had been good for him, and he wrote to us that he was nearly recovered, and should return as strong as ever.

Things were in this uncomfortable state with

us, when one evening the whole terrible mystery was revealed.

Mother had gone to spend the day with Katie, who was far from well. She had been absent since the morning, and I scarcely expected her home that night. I was quite alone, for the two children—there were only two girls left—were busy learning their lessons at the bottom of the garden, and Molly was busy somewhere about the house, or in our little dairy—she is always so busy.

It had been a very hot day, and was still very warm. I had opened all the windows, to admit what cool air there was, after the heat of the day, and was sitting by the work-table in the sitting-room window, with the curtain drawn back, and the shade over the lamp.

The scent of mingled jasmine and orange flowers came in from the garden, and the croak of the tree-frogs rang shrilly through the air, as it does on warm nights. Far off, at intervals, I

could hear the cao-cao of the mawssawke, dreamily mellowed by the distance. It made me melancholy. It made me feel unusually dreary and alone. I wished Otto would come home, and bear me company; it was so *very* quiet since the children had gone to bed—for even the sound of their voices was better than nothing. More than once I dropped my needle-work, listening for his footsteps.

Was it a presentiment of evil that made me so uneasy? I cannot tell; it may be so.

I was sitting listening, for the third or fourth time in this manner, when I suddenly heard the sound of rapid footsteps, followed by the sharp click of the garden gate. I threw down my work, and rose up, just as Otto rushed through the window, and throwing himself full length on the floor groaned aloud.

Terribly frightened, I knelt down beside him, and stooping my face to his, chafed his cold hands in mine.

"Otto! dear Otto! what is the matter? Are you ill?" I repeated, again and again. But he did not answer, and I heard that he was sobbing as if his heart would break.

What could I do? "Oh, Otto dear," I exclaimed, in distress; "you must be ill, or else something terrible is the matter. I must call Molly," I added, attempting to rise; but he clutched my dress, and held me fast.

"Call no one," he exclaimed hoarsely. "Only help me, Beattie, or I shall go mad."

"My poor boy!" I answered anxiously; "what is it? What is the matter; only tell me, that I may know how to help you."

But he only shook with emotion, and rising, I hastily poured a restorative medicine into a glass, and insisted upon his taking it.

"If you have something to tell me, dear, this will do you good, and help you to tell it," I said, as with a trembling hand, I put the glass to his lips. He drank the draught, and presently after

seemed calmer. Then rising from the floor, and throwing himself along the sofa, with his face concealed in the pillows, he told me the whole of the terrible tale. I do not know how I bore the recital. My poor brother! My dear younger brother, so easily led astray.

It appeared he had been going wrong for a long time. Led on by evil companionship, he had formed gambling habits, losing and winning alternately, and always venturing more. On more than one occasion he had abstracted small sums from his employers, which, as he had free access to the cash, it was unhappily too easy to do without detection—for a time at least. He had continued to win back sufficient to return these *loans*, as he called them, without detection, and in consequence gradually became more reckless, taking larger and larger sums, and betting more heavily. Once or twice he had been in terrible trouble, finding it difficult to make up the money in time. On one such occasion he

had parted with his watch; a handsome expensive engraving—Swiss scenery—one he valued very highly, had been sold to make up a like deficiency. But he was not cured even by these warnings. Two evenings before, half wild with excitement and the taunts of his companions, he had taken fifty pounds from the safe, and recklessly staking it all, had lost. Mad with fear, and with the thought that he had only to try again and his luck must turn, he took a hundred pounds this time—that too was staked, and *lost*, and then half blind with terrible remorse, he had come home with the wild hope that I could help him.

What could I do? I rose, and walked to and fro, with clasped hands and aching brow. Something *must* be done, and *at once*; but I had no money, only a poor little saving of ten pounds, for emergencies, and *too* small to be of use in this.

"I must help you, somehow or other, my poor boy!" I exclaimed, putting my hand upon

his burning brow, and smoothing back his curly hair. "When must this money be returned?"

"To-morrow morning, at latest!"

To-morrow! It seemed like a death-blow to hope or exertion. One hundred and fifty pounds to be raised by to-morrow! But how?—how? My head whirled with the thought. Yet it *must* be done; *everything* must be sacrificed to save him; and he, poor erring one—was too ill to do any thing for himself.

I formed a sudden resolution.

"Otto dear; you must just go straight to bed, and I will send dear old Molly to give you some medicine. Trust the rest to me. I'll do all I can to make things right. I'll get the money, if it is to be got; but you must do your part, dear; that is, go quietly to bed, take what I shall tell Molly to give you, that you may be well enough to go to the office to-morrow. And, oh my poor boy, pray, if you have never prayed before, that

you may be kept in the future from these great sins."

He sobbed like a child, poor fellow, and clasping my hands, faltered out—

"Help me, dear Beattie, and I'll never drink or bet again."

"I'll help you," I answered, with a firm resolve to do it that nerved me for action, and, seeing him safely to his bedroom door, I went to find Molly and give her instructions how to act; also to desire her to remain up till my return.

Dear old soul; she asked no questions, but seemed to divine the situation. Master Otto ill, and in trouble; that was enough. Yes, she would see to everything, and wait up for my return.

"But you'll be ill yourself, Miss Beattie, I'm afraid," said the kind creature. "You're not fit to be running about at night. You're as white as a ghost *now*."

"I'm not going very far," I replied. But I

drank off a glass of water, as I put on my hat, and flung a light scarf round me, and presently stood out alone in the night.

Dark—so dark it seemed—for the moon rose late, and the trees cast heavy shadows; while the wind whispering through the trees had a weird and dreary sound. With feet winged by fear I hurried through the garden to the little back gate. I could scarcely see a yard before me. Once my light dress caught in a white rose tree, and a shower of full-blown petals fell to the ground, scattering their incense as I hurriedly disengaged it. Another time I nearly stumbled over a large watering-can, that had been left on one side of the path by one of the girls. But on I sped; out at the little gate, and across the paddock—for there were only two places at which I could ask help with any chance of success—first Mr. Monteith's, and the Gordons.

Mr. Monteith's was the nearest, the most likely place—for Kenneth was away—and on-

ward I sped; in at the great gates; up the long dark side-road; the great dogs baying at me as I passed their kennels, though they quieted down at a word; and all the time my poor heart beating, and my lips trembling with prayer for help and guidance, as they had never done before. "What should I say without betraying my brother, and yet obtain the required loan?"

"It shall be given you what to say," came flashing back to memory like a voice, and on I went in the strength of that hope.

A moment after I stood gasping at the hall door, exhausted both by agitation and my rapid walk.

The doors were all open, and the soft light of the lamp looked so comforting, coming after the darkness. Even before I touched the bell, Alice met me on the threshold with exclamations and extended hands.

"Beattie! alone! and so late! Is anything the matter?"

"Is your papa at home, Alice?" I eagerly asked.

"No, dear; he's away at B——. We don't expect him home till the end of the week—but what is it Beattie? anything we can do?"

"No, dear, no; nothing. Only don't tell mother that I have been here, if you see her. It's something to do with Otto: you can't help, indeed. I'm off to the Gordons, now."

"Not alone, though?" said Alice, in consternation; "I will go with you."

"No; I'd rather go alone: excuse me, dear, I can't stop."

"You can't *walk:* here, slip on my riding-skirt; I've only just come in from a canter to the Morrises with George. The pony is still at the gate, I'll come for her to-morrow and see how you all are."

How glad I was to accept her offer. Another moment and I was cantering away on the good little creature along the hard dry road; he knew

the way better than I did, cantering away, but with scarcely a hope in my heart of the *immediate* help we needed; uttering again and again the cry, "Lord, help Thou me!"

It was so dark, I could scarcely see the road; it was well the pony knew it so well. He never swerved to the right or to the left, excepting when trees or bushes were in the way, and that seldom occurred, for the road was clear and well frequented. It was evidently a familiar one to him, and I let him go on unchecked, thinking and praying for dear erring Otto, for dear mother, as I rode alone through the darkness, and thinking as much as I dare think, for it was all as dark, as black within as without.

The pony stopped at the old slip panel of its own accord, and springing down, I was just letting down the bar, when a tall figure emerged out of the darkness and laid his hands upon the rails, while a well-known voice exclaimed,—

"Who is it? not Beattie, surely?"

"Yes ; Beattie ! " I returned, with a great sob in my voice, but with a throb of thankfulness and a feeling of intense joy, for it was Kenneth Gordon who spake. "Oh, *when* did you come home ? "

"Only an hour ago," he answered ; and taking the pony and leading it on one side, he returned to me. Taking hold of my hands he held them in his strong firm clasp, for they were trembling sadly. "I felt that I could stay no longer, that I *must* come home, and it seemed that I was wanted ; " he added gently, "What is the matter, Beattie ? "

How could I tell him ? Tears came before words, a perfect passion of tears, they had been so long pent up. He did not attempt to take me to the house, but quietly seated me on a log that lay near the slip panel, and sat down by my side.

"Something is the matter : will you not trust me with it ? Something of importance could

only have brought you through this darkness alone, I know that."

"Yes," I whispered, "I was coming for help."

"And cannot *I* help you?" he answered, in a voice which so truly said how gladly he would if he could.

"More than any one else!" I exclaimed in my sore trouble; and as he clasped my hands still closer in his, murmuring gently as he bent his head towards me, "Tell me *all*, Beattie; I shall love to help you." I told him all: told him of my brother's bitter shame, his sin, his sickness and repentance; and it was not half so hard to tell him as I thought it would have been, not half so hard as it would have been to have spoken to Mr. Monteith—or even to Bella. He heard it all so kindly, so sympathizingly.

"Never fear, dear Beattie," he exclaimed cheerfully, as I stopped speaking; "Don't be *too* troubled. At any cost *your* brother should have been saved; but this is a little matter for me to

help in. It shall all be made right. I can see now what a good thing it was that the bank was closed as I passed it this afternoon. I grumbled then, but now I have the money all in good notes. You had better not come in now, this affair need go no farther. I will just go back and get my pocket-book, and if you will ride on slowly, and wait under the big gum, I'll come home with you, and settle the matter."

"How can I ever thank you," I exclaimed, as he came up at last to where I was waiting under the great gum-tree that stood in the middle of the road a quarter of a mile from the house. I was so relieved, so thankful, such a heavy weight off my mind, surely God had sent him home to our help. "How can I ever thank you for saving my brother?"

"By not thanking me at all!" he replied, taking the pony's reins into his own hands, "unless, indeed, Beattie—but no," he added, "it would not be fair to ask you now."

CHAPTER XVII.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

I WAS interrupted the other day in the midst of my writing; Geoffrey came home rather earlier than we expected, looking so brown and well after his tour, and so happy in his work. It did us all so much good to see him; mother is twice as strong and as well for his home-coming.

Of course he knows all about poor Otto's illness, and its cause, but it is such a comfort that he is here to help us in nursing him, for he is still very ill, as well as to think what will be best for his future; for now there is hope of his recovery, we must think of that.

Kenneth! what has he not been? What has

he not proved? What could we have done without him?"

Where did I leave off? Ah, I remember—just where he rejoined me, under the old gum, just where he made that strange speech, as he took the pony's head to lead her home. I did not think much of it then; I was too full of my trouble and its relief; but I thought of it afterwards as I sat and watched by Otto.

It was a quiet ride home; Kenneth led the pony all the way, talking hopefully to me of Otto.

"He had had a severe lesson," he said, "and he trusted that it would be overruled for his good. At any rate the way was clear now; he must at once be removed from the influence of these bad companions. After that there would be time to think, to decide for the best; it would not be a very difficult matter. We might indeed be thankful that it was no worse, that it was not without a remedy, and that the vice was nipped in the bud so soon."

Ah, was I not thankful, so thankful, to have his strong hand to help in a work that before had appeared all but hopeless. What a difference between the feelings with which I turned from home—going out into the darkness—to those with which I returned. Helped—helped in my great trouble, at least from its present dread, and hopeful for the future.

Kenneth took the pony quietly to the stable—he would do that—and then followed me to the house.

"You are quite sure that this sum is the extent of his liabilities?" he asked, as he put the exact number of notes into my hand.

"Yes; quite sure. He told me *all*. I begged him to do so, and am certain he has," I answered.

"The way is tolerably clear then; that is, if he can only keep well enough to go to the office as usual to-morrow; he must do that. He will,

however, be relieved if he knows the money is safe. Will you tell him, or shall I?"

"I think I had better go first," I faltered; for I knew what Otto was, and that in any case his feelings of disgrace and shame must be hard to bear.

"I must see him to arrange matters; but by all means go first, Beattie," he replied, opening the door for me as he spoke.

How my heart beat as I ran upstairs to Otto's room, and, with a little knock at the door, went in. He was lying tossing about on his pillow, flushed and fevered, and with that look of despair on his face, so painful to witness in one so young. He turned eagerly towards the door as I went in, and half rose in bed.

"Well?" his eye asked eagerly.

"It's all right; I've got the money," I replied to the question of his eyes. And then—oh how thankfully—I showed him the bundle of notes. With one clasp of my hand—he turned his face

away—and I heard a loud sob beneath the bed-clothes.

"Kenneth was home; he has done it; and so kindly, dear Otto. He is coming up to see you, and arrange all."

He did not demur; so I ran downstairs to send him up.

"Don't be troubled, Beattie," he said, as he passed me, to go upstairs. "I am not going to be either harsh or unkind. I will manage it all well; the wound needs tender handling, I know; only trust me."

"I do," I answered; and he left me. It was nearly half an hour when he came down. He came into the sitting-room, where he had left his hat.

"Your brother is asleep," he said. "I had fortunately one of my anodyne powders with me, and I got him to take it. It acted like a charm. If he can sleep, it will quiet the nervous system; otherwise he will not be fitted for his morning's ride and work; but the anodyne is doing

its work. To-morrow, if all is well, he will go as usual to the office; I shall follow him. If all goes right, he has agreed to come to the door of the office with his handkerchief in his hand. In any case I shall be there in time of danger. Beatrice, do not take this too hardly; it may prove needful, useful discipline; it may be overruled for the good of all—good, at least, may come out of this evil—don't forget that. Pray with me, that it may be so."

And holding both my hands in his, for a moment looking down into my face, much as he did when he made that hesitating speech, he turned abruptly away, and went off.

It was little sleep I got that night, though Otto slept quietly enough. Neither Molly nor I went to bed till dawn, for she insisted on keeping me company. I know she thought I was nervous, and that Otto was less ill than I imagined; for she several times said that I looked the worst of the two, and that well might be, for he was, for

the time at least, oblivious to trouble, disgrace, and sin, while I was painfully awake to it all, and dare utter no syllable of that trouble even into her faithful ears. How thankful I was through that long dreary night to feel that I could freely unburden my troubles to Him, who at *all times* regards the cry of His children, and never turns His ear from their requests.

Oh, the cold, hard creed of the present day, that would turn away the suffering and the needy with their petitions, on the plea that the great God – the Maker of the Universe—is too high to be troubled with such matters. How little they know, who thus argue of God in Christ Jesus; our *Daysman,* who, though Lord of lords, and King of kings, is our brother, and our friend; having taken upon Him our flesh, that He might be truly *one* with us as He is with God. *One!* He knoweth therefore our frame, our infirmities, our needs, and therefore He says, *Ask,* that you may be *full.* Ye have not, because ye *ask* not!

Perish the creed that would keep us away from Christ, in whom *all* fulness dwells.

How I dreaded the morning, and Otto's awaking. But the sleep had done him good, and when he did awake, he seemed far better than I could have hoped. He eat no breakfast though —simply drank off his cup of coffee, and then, with the precious notes in his possession, went off at last at the usual hour, looking very white and ill.

I do not know how I got through the morning, with that dead weight of anxiety on my mind. Truly enough could I plead headache, for every pulse in my head was beating, both with the night's watching and the anxiety. It was a great comfort to me to know that Kenneth would be at hand in case of anything happening; but I little knew that he was following him the whole way in his buggy, just keeping him in sight, never, in fact, losing sight of him till he saw him enter the door of the office. He was the first to

arrive, for he opened the door with his key. Reassured by that, Kenneth quickened his horse's pace, and drove by rather noisily to the bank at the corner of the next street, and, springing out, he fastened the bridle to the customary post, and stood waiting on the step for the opening of the door.

He had a deposit to make, certainly, but he knew he was too early for that. The bank steps were, however, near the spot he had chosen to wait for Otto's signal. It seemed, he afterwards said, as if something must be wrong, and he began to be afraid that the bank would really open before the required signal was given; indeed, he heard footsteps from within, and then the unlocking of doors, and was full of alarm at the failure of the promise, when, as the bank doors flew open, he was inexpressibly relieved to see Otto standing at the office door, glancing from right to left, and carelessly drawing his handkerchief through his fingers. With a

slight flourish, he raised it to his face, and went in.

That was enough; Kenneth knew that he was saved—saved, at least, from present and public disgrace—saved, he hoped, permanently.

He was busy in one of the principal stores, nearly an hour after, looking at goods to be forwarded to the station, when a youth came hurriedly in, and asked for Mr. Gordon.

Kenneth turned quickly round upon him.

"You want me?" he asked.

"Mr. Smith wants you, sir," said the boy. "Mr. Melton has been taken suddenly ill in the office; some sort of fit, or faint. Mr. Smith saw your buggy in the township, and thought you would drive him home."

"I will be there in one minute, my lad," was Kenneth's reply; and hurriedly concluding his directions, he jumped into his buggy and drove rapidly down the street.

Poor Otto! the danger of discovery being over,

the re-action came. Kenneth said when he entered he was lying on the floor, white and senseless, and pallid as a corpse. At first Kenneth feared he was dead; but it was not so. The old doctor, who had been called in by the frightened clerks, soon reassured him on that point, and at length, by the aid of restoratives judiciously administered, he so far recovered as to be taken home. Kenneth had drawn up the hood of the buggy, and placed him reclining among some pillows he borrowed for the occasion. He also persuaded the dear old doctor to drive with them. How glad I was to see him—for mother was at home anxiously waiting for news—and it was very reassuring to her to have him at hand, when instead of the news, her boy came home to her so ill that she might be excused for thinking he had come home to die.

We told her of his illness; that we had to do; but of his guilt she knew nothing.

We did not need to add *that* drop to her sorrow.

And through that terrible afternoon and night, what should we have done, dear Kenneth, without you?

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN EVENING WALK, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

SUCH a soft, sweet, autumnal day; so calm, so quiet, so delightful. I have the house quite to myself, or nearly so, for there are only three of us at home. Molly, in the kitchen, (I hear the soft clink of her pans, and know she is making something good for tea), and Otto in the sitting-room, on the sofa, asleep. He has come out of a heavy sickness into a state of convalescence; but he is still weak, and quite the invalid; but so patient, so quiet. A mighty change has come over him, and, as dear mother says—for she knows all now—he has been saved as by fire; he will never transgress again.

"We must get him away as soon as he gets better," said Kenneth; but I did not know all that was involved in that.

So much has happened during the last few weeks I can scarcely believe it, and yet it is true.

Ever since poor Otto's illness Kenneth has been a constant visitor, coming in and out at all times; watching with Geoffrey through the night, and cheering us on through all the dull passages of the illness, as he so well knows how, for Otto was very unconscious, with fits of violent delirium at times, and we had scarcely any hopes of recovery at first; and when he was most violent, it was Kenneth's touch, gentle, and kind as any woman's, that soothed, and tranquillized, and quieted.

He too, comforted mother more than any one else could do; even Geoffrey or Frederick had not half the influence over her that he had.

We had plenty of kind inquiries, plenty of

visitors, but we were very glad to obey the doctor's strict injunction that no one should be admitted, for over and over again in those terrible moments of delirium, the poor boy betrayed himself with his wild words. How harrowing they were to hear; but they were heard only by loving ears; and hope mingled with the grief and the shame.

Well, but all that dark portion of our history is past. We came out of it feeling that goodness and mercy had been mingled in the cup; yes, even *I* had learnt how good our Father had been; for the "snare was broken, and the prisoner had escaped." The fire had been very fierce, but it had *purified,* and our dear boy came from the furnace even as a little child.

The money-matter was no trouble to us, for we knew Kenneth would not hurry for its return; he would take it back in any way—part at a time. Besides, as mother said, we had his children with us, and we could make room for

one or two more boarders, and then we could soon repay it. On *that* score it seems he had his own thoughts.

The summer had gone very rapidly with us. We have seen very little of it, and thought little about it—which is about the same thing—at least, only so much as the heat was trying to an invalid. But the summer has passed, and autumn, with its pleasant cool mornings and evenings, its balmy days, and fresh springing flowers, is almost over now. It is late in April, and the leaves have been falling from the poplars, and the fruit-trees are beginning to look bare. Our violets have blossomed again—not as they do in spring—but still their sweet fragrance fills the air when the dew falls upon them, or the rain, which has been very plentiful lately.

I have scarcely been out for weeks. I never seemed to have the time, or to feel that I could be spared. It was an illusion, no doubt, but my nerves had been greatly tried, and it was quite

a fact that I was as near being ill myself as I possibly could be, without regularly succumbing to the enemy.

I came into the sitting-room late one afternoon, just an hour before tea, and found Kenneth sitting with Otto in the gloaming. I had been correcting exercises in the school-room till my head ached, and my senses reeled; and I suppose my face betrayed a little of my feelings, for they both looked at me very earnestly as I entered.

"Dear old Beattie," said Otto, breaking the rather ominous silence. "This will never do. You have been killing yourself for me, and I didn't deserve it. But you are making me wretched now, for you won't take care of yourself."

"We shall have to take care of her, in spite of herself," said Kenneth, rising determinedly, and walking out into the hall. He came back presently, with the first hat and shawl he could find

hanging there, and placing the one on my head—it happened to be an old felt hat of Otto's—and folding the shawl round my shoulders, he took my hand on his arm, and led me out into the air, saying, half jocosely, "My first prescription is a walk."

"But you would not have me go out such a fright as this," I exclaimed expostulatingly.

"A fright! I think the hat is remarkably becoming, if you allude to that," he answered, laughing. "And though a brisk walk at this time of evening will be good for you, you need the warmth of your mother's shawl to protect you from the damp after the rain. You have thick shoes, I hope?"

"Yes; I changed my slippers for thick shoes a little while ago, intending to go to the bottom of the garden for some cress for tea."

"Well, one of the children can do that, for I expect they were going with you. Yes, I see I am right, and for once they must go and cut the

cress alone. We are going in another direction, a change of air will do you no harm."

"But this hat—let me get my own?"

"Will you not believe me that it is exceedingly becoming? Besides," he added, laughing, "in this murky light scarcely any one would recognize you, even supposing we should meet a neighbour, and that will be a benefit, as we don't want to stay to talk; that would not accord with my prescription."

I laughed, and yielded, for the hat was well enough, and its broad, soft, grey brim came over my face; so I pinned the comfortable shawl up to my throat, and quietly yielded to his *prescription*, which led us out at the front gate, and along the road, just opposite to the direction of the township—a road fenced in by posts and rails on either hand, with rose hedges between—but of course the roses were not there. There were, however, red hips in their place, in great abundance: a pretty picture they made, too, in

the daylight, among the fading red and yellow leaves, now it was too dark to see them ; leaves and berries were all one colour in the murky light. But the walk was pleasant enough, fresh with the recent rain, and with that delicious freshness that rain always brings.

We walked in the middle of the road, it was comparatively firm walking there, for the ground is of a hard, dry nature, and does not long retain the moisture. The grass and herbage at the side of the road was, however, dark and heavy with drops, and that we carefully avoided. There were pools here and there across the road, round which we had occasionally to steer. But though the evening was drawing in rapidly, there was a fair young moon high in the heavens, sailing amidst fleecy clouds, and looking lovely even with the halo which, surrounding it, betokened more rain.

Yes, Kenneth was right; I wanted forcing out —I should never have come by my own will ; and

now it was so very pleasant, the air was so invigorating, that I was very glad I came.

We were by no means silent; Kenneth had plenty to say. We had not had such an opportunity since the happy change had come over me—since I had learnt to look upon God as a loving Father and Friend; that we fully discussed. Then he had a good deal to say about his station—of the men upon it, and the families he knew within five, and ten, and twenty miles of his home, and of the good he hoped to be able to work among them. But somehow or other this subject of conversation seemed to make him serious; and when at last, after a long walk up the road, we turned to come home again, he suddenly broke the silence into which we had both unconsciously fallen, by saying,—

"Beattie, do you not think after all this long time of serving and waiting I might be allowed to say a word I have so long wished to say?"

I was very much startled by his words, and

yet I own I had a forewarning of what was coming. My hand trembled very much on his arm; he must have felt it, for he put his own on it to steady it. I did not answer—I could not. I felt unaccountably stupid, or frightened; I scarcely indeed knew *how* I felt; but he did not notice it, for he presently went on, gathering strength in his voice as he spoke, encouraged perhaps by my silence or by my foolish trembling.

"Have you never thought, dear Beattie," he continued, "that I very often absented myself from my home-station, and found my way down here? Did you never guess the cause?"

"The children," I faltered.

"No, not the children; I knew they were well cared for. I should not have required to visit them so frequently, knowing they were in such good hands, dearly as I love them and as they love me. No, Beattie, it was *you* I came to see. Yes, even when I saw little hope that you cared

for me—when I thought that I *bored* you by my words and my presence, I could not keep away. Did not you know it?"

"No," I faintly answered, "not then."

"No, I don't think you did, we thought so differently *then*. But now, Beattie, we have passed through so much together; and I have found it so hard waiting to ask you if you thought you could care for me. Don't tell me you cannot, just when I have got a little hope. I don't think I could bear it."

"I do care for you." It was almost below my breath that I answered.

He faced round upon me, and taking both my hands in his, and pulling off the old felt hat, looked eagerly into my face. But it did not tell much, it was so young a moon, too young to reveal my hot, flushed cheeks; and I was not looking at him, so he could not see that my eyes were full of tears—notwithstanding the absence of the hat-brim.

"Beattie, do you think you can care for me as much as I care for you?" he asked in low earnest tones.

"I think I can," I replied, with an upward glance—half fear, half glad tears.

He drew my arm again through his, clasping my hands with such a loving pressure. For a moment he could not speak.

"God bless you, darling!" he presently said. "God bless us both, for with His aid and blessing we shall be very useful and very happy together."

I can scarcely think of that evening now, and how peacefully bright and happy it was; for mother knew, and Otto, and Geoffrey; indeed they had all guessed it was inevitable, and there was not one dissentient voice.

After this, I think an evening in autumn, fresh with recent rain, and lighted by a young moon, will always bring back the memory of that hour's walk.

CHAPTER XIX.

PEOPLE'S GOSSIP.

I HAVE not much time to write now. Ours has been such a busy home since I wrote last—since that momentous evening on which I turned over so new a page of my life. I may well call it so, for the whole plan of our future is changed. The old home is not yet to be broken up, till Geoffrey is married, and that will not be for some time yet. When it does take place, dear mother will divide her time amongst us—with me, with Kate, with Geoffrey in turn; till then she will still keep house with Geoffrey, and Molly will take good care of her. Alice Monteith too has promised to come in every day, to drive dear mother out in

their pretty low basket chaise, and to act in every way as the daughter she will one day be.

When, indeed, it came to the thought of leaving her, I drew back and demurred; but she would not hear of it, and every one of them protested against it. Kenneth has promised to bring me very often to see her.

"And then, I am so near Katie, my child, and have Geoffrey and Alice with me," she added; yet it could scarcely reconcile me to the thought of leaving her.

There is only one thing that has reconciled dear mother to my going, and so soon, and that is that Otto's future home is to be with me—with us. Kenneth has taken him under his care; he is to manage the books, and assist the overseer. It will be a far more lucrative post than the one he has resigned, and is in every respect good for him. Otto himself is delighted with the idea. A perfect change of scene and life is what he needs,

and will have. Nothing better could have happened.

They are managing it all between them, and I let them do pretty much as they like. I would rather have waited a bit, but the general voice is against it, and so I must submit. It seems all strange to me, and I can scarcely realize, when Kenneth is absent, that I shall so soon be his wife, and his children mine. I know I am taking a great responsibility upon me; and if I were not so used to the dear children—if they did not cling so to me, I should feel it more so; but we have been so long together that it will be less difficult. In Kenneth's presence I never think of it at all. Then too, his father and mother, and especially Bella and Maggie, are so pleased. Bella's gladness is almost absurd. She says it is because I have made her brother so happy.

The children have been staying at their grandma's the last few days, for our school has been dismissed, and I have nothing to do but

make preparations for this important event of my life. Otto is very much better, and it is arranged for him to go next week to the station with Bella, to prepare it for my reception. The children are going too, and till then they are stopping at their grandmamma's, as I said.

Of course they have a thousand questions to ask, especially as to why they are going to live at the station—as naturally they would. So Bella one afternoon, when they had been particularly anxious to know who would take care of them in their old home, confided to them as a great secret that their papa was going to be married, and their new mamma would take care of them.

Little did she imagine the storm, the perfect tempest of tears, she had aroused.

"Oh, would not Aunt Bella persuade papa to allow them to stay at school with dear Miss Beattie and kind Mrs. Melton? They were so happy there, they did not want to go away; and they would study so hard, and practise so well,

and be so good, if only they might not go up to the station to the new mamma," they piteously exclaimed.

"But how do you know that you will not like this new mamma very much?" asked Bella, rather dismayed by the storm she had raised, and wondering how best to lay it. "How can you tell but that you may be far happier up at the station than you have ever been before?"

"Oh—no—no—no, that can never be," said Isabel with indignant tears. "We have never been so happy as we have since we have been with dear Miss Beattie; we shall never love the new mamma like we do her."

Here was a fine opening, thought Bella.

"Don't make so sure of that," she said, smiling archly. "What if I tell you she is Miss Beattie herself?"

Isabel sprang up, and confronted her with glittering eyes.

"Do you really mean it, auntie?" she asked excitedly.

"Oh, auntie, dear, *is* it true?" asked little Annie, springing into her lap, and hiding her head on her shoulder.

"It *is* true, my darling; Miss Beattie will be your mamma. And now you will be very happy in your old home, and will help to make papa very happy, will you not?"

Had I known of this breach of confidence I should have had a clue to the penetrating glances, and additional shower of kisses, with which I was greeted on my next visit to Bella. But they had promised to be silent, and they kept their word bravely enough to me, though I think their papa heard something more of it, and was well pleased to hear.

Ah, how can I ever be thankful enough to my Heavenly Father for not leaving me in my dark distrust of Him, and of His ways! The trials I have passed through, one after the other as they

have come upon me, have taught me to know Him better, and to love Him more. How often I have thought that my way was right, and longed to have it—that His was wrong, and strove to avoid it! How often have I felt that there was no love, no mercy in anything that has befallen me! It is for such little faith as mine that the Lord has surely left those words of His, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter." As Kenneth says, we are always trying to understand the mysteries that only eternity can unravel.

My future sphere of usefulness will be very much concentrated in my home, with Kenneth and the children, and Otto, and the families on the station. But Kenneth says I shall find the sphere extensive enough. He intends to arrange for a Sunday service in the large dining-room, he told me yesterday; and he has ordered a fine cabinet organ from Adelaide, at which I am to preside, both as organist and leader of the sing-

ing. But there will be Otto, and Kenneth himself has a fine voice, and both the children sing very nicely.

How strange it all seems! how oddly it has all come about! It is quite true that at one time I did think Kenneth was annoying, with his words and questions. I used once to be angry with him for his probing, though even then I knew how kindly it was all meant.

People will gossip. Our neighbourhood is not at all behindhand in this. So this engagement of mine has been pretty freely discussed in many quarters, I hear. Some pity me, so I am told, because Kenneth is a widower, and the heavy responsibilitiy of bringing up his children will rest on me. But they may spare their pity; *I* am not afraid. The dear motherless children are attached to me already, and it will not be a difficult thing to guide them. I know something of it, having had them so long under my care. Then their father will help; and if I should fail, I

have learnt where to go for wisdom and help. So I am not afraid.

Bella and Otto go next week, it is fully decided. The place is very healthy; and the doctor says there can be nothing better for Otto, and that the sooner he went the better. I am glad Bella is going with him, for she will see that he wants for nothing, I know. She is to stay a fortnight with him, and will return just in time to be my bridesmaid. It will be a very quiet wedding, at home, in the large old parlour, and only just our own family circle. I could not bear to have it differently, and Kenneth is quite willing that it shall be as I like best.

There have been some splendid rains through the country, alternated by bright, pleasant weather. It is very cold to-night, and the moon looks frosty. I have been obliged to wrap myself round in a warm shawl while I write. I must really put down my pen, or I shall certainly be thoroughly chilled.

Dear mother is so much better. Otto's recovery and altered circumstances have cheered her greatly, and I am sure she is glad to have Kenneth for a son-in-law, even though it takes me away from her for a while. I know very well that she rejoices to have Otto detached from his old associates, to have Kenneth over him, and me to take care of him, and pet him, as I always have done. This is the chief ingredient in her great content.

It will be pleasant for me too, to have my brother with me. The children are delighted with the arrangement.

He will be a long while before he recovers his light, buoyant spirits again, I am afraid. He has deeply felt his sin, and still grieves over it; but it has not yet led him, like Bunyan's Pilgrim, to the cross. But we are very sanguine; it may yet.

CHAPTER XX.

ADIEU.

A WIDE stretch of undulating park-land, with groups of splendid gum-trees, and black woods, and wild cherry-trees, all of different foliage, and all rich in their varied hues, spreads before my dining-room window. To the right hand, as far as the eye can reach, it continues the same gently undulating, well-wooded country, with pleasant vistas through the trees, and deep breadths of shadow under their branches. A few boulders scattered here and there in their very midst mark the course of a babbling creek, that trickles its way amidst stones, and broken rocks, and green water-cresses, for miles. The sheep

and the cattle drink up its sweet waters, for they are not in the least brackish, as most creeks are; and at intervals the banks enlarge, and the trees reflect their waving branches in clear, deep pools, where little fish dart too and fro, and the bell note of the huge bull-frog harmonizes with the silence. It is to the pureness and brightness of the waters of this creek that our station owes its pretty name of "Silver Brook."

To the left the ground gradually swells, and rises into rocky heights, overgrown with verdure, with indentations of emerald green in the spring, though at intervals their very bareness is lovely by the contrast; their very ruggedness adds to their beauty. At the foot of the range, and half hidden from view by a belt of trees, not all of nature's planting—not all indigenous to the soil, stand the wool-sheds, and sheep pens, and cattle-yards.

A long, low house, of many rooms, surrounded by a wide verandah, draped with all green um-

brageous climbing plants, is my pleasant home. A gem of a garden, with the flower-beds thickly skirting a large smooth lawn, slopes down from the front door, on either side of which is the dining-room and parlour, while wings on each side of the house have been allotted to the schoolroom and library. Our little snuggery of a breakfast-room looks out upon the hilly range and the distant wool-sheds.

This is my home—a bright, a peaceful, and a *very* happy one. Time has run away so fast, it is fifteen months since I entered it. My little three-months-old boy, dear little fellow! is sleeping peacefully in his cradle. His sisters are passionately fond of him, and Kenneth glories in his boy. Such a big fellow he is, bidding fair one day to rival papa. For myself, I have need to pray to be kept from idolatry—to be kept very near my Father, who has given me so many blessings, so much happiness. I would not, while rejoicing in His gifts, forget the loving Giver of all.

Dear mother is with me. She came here a little while after baby was born. Katie, and her husband, and dear little girl, are coming next week, to stay for a month; and after that we shall go back together, for dear old Geoffrey is to be married, and Mr. Monteith has determined on a large wedding party, and Alice declares that not one of us must be absent.

Otto has greatly changed; he has become so thoroughly manly, strong, and well, and burly-looking—no longer thin and boy-like. Dear mother is so proud of him, and so are we all; and he is very fond of her. Kenneth finds him a great help, not only with the accounts, but with the general overlooking of the station. If he is not yet a decided Christian, we have good reason to hope that it will not be long before he is one. He attends all our Sabbath services, and presides at the organ; and his doing this has had great influence with the other young men on the station, some of whom, it is easy to see, have

occupied different positions in the home-land, and under good influence may recover caste. Yes, Otto has a good chance of doing them good, even without a word, by the mere force of example. His old blithe spirits have returned, and Isabel and Annie would be lost without their merry uncle.

The dead past is buried—so far, at least, that it is never mentioned; but to Otto the memory of it still lives. The love he shows to Kenneth betrays this. I verily believe he would go through fire and water for him. He has paid back every farthing of his debt. Kenneth would not hear of it at first, but he insisted on doing so; and as his salary is handsome, and Kenneth has thrown many opportunities in his way of increasing it, it would have been unwise to have held out against it. Indeed the very habit of saving has been good for the dear fellow. He is stronger, *mentally* stronger, by many degrees.

And what about the fears of the good people on *my* behalf? I can only say they have been thrown away. Little difficulties have arisen, as

under the circumstances they were likely to do, but love dissipated them all, and we are very loving altogether, with very few discordant elements. Dear Kenneth is more than all I expected to find him—kind, firm, and strong. He says his home is a very happy one, and that he owes it all to *me*. What do not I owe to *him?*

This is the Sabbath morning. We have our meeting now in a large wool-shed. One of the station hands, a carpenter by trade, has fitted it up very neatly as a chapel. A small platform at one end holds the reading-desk, below it is the organ and seats for the singers, and of these Otto has a very harmonious band. Some of the young people from the nearest station, with the overseer's children, Isabel and Annie, our housemaid, and three or four of the men on our station, regularly meet for practice, and find it very pleasant to do so. A love of harmony has a very softening effect; indeed the charm of the singing gives us good congregations. Sometimes the place is quite full, and the traps of every descrip-

tion, and long rows of horses under the trees, form a very pretty sight. They are coming in now in every direction ; I can see them as I sit here. Kenneth generally has to take the service, and his preaching is very much appreciated ; he is doing much good. Occasionally—very occasionally, it is true—we have ministers from town, or from other country places. Next Sunday Frederick will preach, and then I expect we shall scarcely have standing-room, the news flies so fast.

We have a Sunday school, too ; not a large number certainly, for it only consists of the children on the station, and some from the next. Our overseer has half a dozen children ; he is a fine gentlemanly fellow, and has a dear little wife, who is quite a companion to me ; we get on famously together, for she is such a warm-hearted Christian. The two eldest children are sweet girls, of Isabel's and Annie's ages, and they are much together ; indeed I have them daily to share in their studies, and the plan works excellently. I have taught them all, hitherto, exclusively

myself; but Kenneth thinks it is rather too great a tie for me now I have baby, and so Katie has found me a governess—one, she says, I am sure to like. She is a cousin of Frederick's and an orphan, and is not only very clever, but a dear affectionate little thing besides. We have none of us seen her yet, and Otto has more than once expressed considerable curiosity about her. It is rather ominous!

I have reached, I know, a bright spot in my history, and may well say "the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage;" but I do not therefore think I shall never more know sorrow. But the past has taught me this lesson, that my Father is—

> "Good when He *gives*, supremely good,
> Nor less when He *denies*;
> That *crosses* in His sovereign hand
> Are blessings in disguise."

But I am not *perfect* in the lesson; I am but a *learner* yet, apt to forget, prone to fail, when it is necessary for the lesson to be practised. Still

my weakness does not lessen His almighty strength; and to those who have no might, He has promised to increase strength. So I will still enjoy the good He has given me, and leave the future, with all its weaknesses, with all its unknown joys or sorrows, to His care.

Our chapel bell is ringing—a monster bullock bell it is, by the bye, which Otto has christened "Great Tom." Its sound of course can only reach those in the immediate vicinity, but it does that effectually, and sounds so Sabbath-like that we all like it. Otto and the girls have already started to take their places in the choir and arrange the tunes, and Kenneth looked in just now to tell me he was going, and to warn me that it was getting late; and so, as I have to follow slowly with dear mother, I must stay my pen, which would otherwise run on and on, beyond the limits of my paper.

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